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Books: MANDY, the life of Peter Mandelson, reviewed by JOHN GRIGG

'God sent grandchildren of pigs and monkeys to us...so we took them'

I wanted to kill more Britons, says terrorist

LAUGHING at the memory of those who died, the leader of the terrorist group that kidnapped 16 western tourists boasted yesterday that his only regret was that he had not killed more of his hostages.

As he was dragged into court by dozens of armed police, Abu Hassan shouted: "I did everything in the name of God so I am sorry for nothing. I am very famous now, but let everyone know I only gave orders to kill the men, not the women."

When told that while he was revealing in his exploits, the funeral of one of his victims was taking place, Hassan shrugged his shoulders and said: "That is not my problem." And asked if he felt any remorse for Margaret Whitehouse's husband, he spat on the floor and said: "He means nothing to me. If my pistol had not jammed he would be dead as well."

For the next 45 minutes this small, scruffy figure harangued the court, exclaiming his own prowess as a terrorist leader, occasionally lecturing people on the Koran and often reviling the holidaymakers who were killed and injured in his gang's fight with Yemeni troops. They were "the grandchildren of pigs and monkeys", he said, adding "God sent them to us, so we took them."

Now, however, Hassan's life could be in the hands of those he left to die, for he could yet be spared execution if those he was mocking ask for mercy. Lawrence Whitehouse said yesterday that he would not ask for the death penalty, which he described as a barbaric punishment. "To execute him would turn him into a martyr and that would fuel his movement," he said. But when I asked Hassan if he wanted



Daniel McGrory, left, and photographer Peter Nicholls watch the Yemen kidnap trial



the bereaved families to plea for clemency, he waved his hands in a gesture of contempt and said: "I am ready to die for my beliefs. If I live I will kill some more."

And when the judge tried in vain to stop Hassan's ranting, he simply turned his back and said scornfully: "If you want to finish this quickly and take me outside and shoot me, then go ahead. I don't care."

As a long list of charges were read out - including the training and arming of five Britons to carry out bombings in Aden on Christmas Day - Hassan tugged at his matted black beard and mumbled "Why bother with any of this?" And when the names of the hostages were read out, with pauses after those who died, he did not bother to listen. He preferred to joke with the elder of the brothers alongside him in the dock, Ahmed Mohammed Ali Atti. The younger brother, 18-year-old Saad Mohammed Ali Atti, looked

terrified as Hassan in yet another outburst lunged across the dock towards him saying: "He has no part in this. I am the leader. I gave the orders for the kidnapping and the bombings. I take full responsibility for the Islamic Army of Aden which I created."

Throughout yesterday's hearing at the Appeal Court in Zinjibar, 30 miles east of Aden, officials called Hassan by his real name, Zain Al Abidin Abu Bakar Al-Mehdar rather than his preferred *nomme de guerre*. Asked his profession, he stood up straight for the only time and declared himself "a Mujahidin warrior working in the cause of God".

As the district attorney then read out warrants for eleven more kidnappers he said had escaped in the desert shoot-out on December 29, Hassan feigned surprise, claiming he had never heard of any of them. Ten minutes later he changed his mind, saying: "I hope those who are at large will continue the Jihad." Then, gazing around the packed courtroom, he added chillingly: "I hope God strikes you all."

Yemeni officials and Western diplomats are worried about terrorist reprisals to free Hassan and the five Britons held in Aden and they drafted in scores of armed police to surround the white-painted courthouse

Continued on page 2, col 5



Abu Hassan is led into court, where he declared: "If you want to take me outside and shoot me, go ahead"

Brazil crisis jolts world markets

By ALASDAIR MURRAY
ECONOMICS
CORRESPONDENT

INTERNATIONAL markets were thrown into turmoil yesterday after Brazil's decision to devalue its currency reawakened fears of a global economic crisis. Shares in London and other European markets suffered heavy losses while the dollar took a battering on the foreign exchanges.

The panic was triggered by the resignation of Gustavo Franco, chief of the Brazilian Central Bank, swiftly followed by the news that Brazil, the world's eighth largest economy, was relaxing its currency bands.

The market read the decision as an effective currency devaluation, sending the Brazilian currency, the real, sprawling on the foreign exchanges. Trading on the Brazilian stock market was briefly suspended after shares plunged 10 per cent. Other Latin American markets suffered sharp falls, with analysts warning of the dangers of a re-run of the crisis which engulfed Asia a year ago.

The crisis forced President Clinton to appeal to the Brazilian Government to continue with the tough reforms that have greatly reduced the country's inflation rate. Brazil accounts for about 20 per cent of all America's exports.

Britain announced it was in touch with other members of the G7 group of leading industrial countries. In London the FTSE 100 index of leading shares ended down 89.5 at 5850.1 - its fourth biggest point loss ever - although the market recovered from a loss of nearly 200 points earlier in the day.

Anatole Kaletsky, page 20
Volatile markets, page 25

Anwar lawyers change tack

Changes of corruption against Anwar Ibrahim, the ousted Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister who is on trial in Kuala Lumpur, were amended to shift their emphasis from sexual misconduct to abuse of power. Page 15, 21

Mugabe retreats

President Mugabe of Zimbabwe has been forced by the International Monetary Fund to retract proposals for the mass nationalisation of white-owned farms. Page 15

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Blair in secret trips to hospital bedsides

By MARK INGLEFIELD, POLITICAL REPORTER

THE Prime Minister, it seems, has taken on the mantle of the late Diana, Princess of Wales, by making secret trips to hospital bedsides.

Tony Blair yesterday disclosed how he made an unannounced evening visit to St Thomas's Hospital in Waterloo on Tuesday, spending an hour chatting with staff about the state of the NHS.

Indeed, a spokesman for No 10 confirmed the excursion was far from the first made by Mr Blair to visit the needy and their carers in hospital.

Parallels with Diana are unavoidable: St Thomas's was even among the hospitals she visited on her own private excursions, in 1981 and 1991.

But, as with Diana, these missions of mercy can be misconstrued. So when Mr Blair disclosed his secret to millions of radio listeners yesterday morning some were inclined to raise a cynical eyebrow.

"Downing" Street insisted

that Mr Blair's visit to St Thomas's was a common occurrence, which is why the press were not told. It was to be a private trip, accompanied by a few policemen and advisers, to assess the problems being confronted by doctors and nurses in the National Health Service.



"He's done wonders for spare beds, everybody's discharging themselves"

But yesterday morning, when asked about the NHS on Radio 5 Live, Mr Blair let slip his secret. "I went myself to a hospital last night and visited the accident and emergency department and talked to some of the nurses there," he said.

William Hague, the Opposition Leader, dubbed the Prime Minister "St Tony of Islington" when he mentioned the visit in the House of Commons yesterday. Mr Hague has, however, hastily arranged a tour of St Mary's hospital, in Paddington, today.

Mr Blair also came under attack from nursing unions after Downing Street said the Prime Minister did not think the NHS was in crisis.

Geoff Martin, head of London Health Emergency, a pressure group, said: "Tony Blair went to the wrong hospital. St Thomas's has a big casualty department, a lot of funds and hasn't been under much pressure over the past few weeks."

Santer threat may stop EU revolt

FROM CHARLES BREMMER IN STRASBOURG

THE fate of Jacques Santer and his Brussels executive will be decided by the European parliament in a vote today after the Commission President took some of the steam out of MEPs' anger by threatening to resign if any of his team were condemned by the assembly.

After a day of manoeuvring, the Commission seemed likely to survive the all-out vote over fraud and mismanagement, which could trigger its automatic dismissal.

However, a chain of threats and counter-threats by the political groups and Mr Santer could still lead the Commission to the political guillotine. This would happen if a majority of MEPs back demands for the sacking of two Commissioners. Edith Cresson of France and Manuel Marin of Spain, the pair deemed most responsible for malpractice in the Commission. However, amid the sound and fury of the Strasbourg Palace of Europe

last night, it also appeared possible that the parliamentary onslaught against the Brussels executive would peter out with a whimper. This would be a humiliating retreat for the assembly that roared, just five months from its next elections. It would also be a big relief for the member governments, which have been aghast at the prospect of paralysis in the EU just as it embarks on long-term spending reforms.

The assembly's 214 Socialists, led by Pauline Green, a British Labour MEP, have refused to "pick off" individual commissioners, but want backing for new controls against fraud and mismanagement. Edward McMillan-Scott, leader of the British Tory group, who backs full censure, described this as Mrs Green's "dance of death" with Mr Santer and he predicted a majority against the individual Commissioners today.

Velvet touch fails, page 12

Hume denies he has contempt for Carey

By RUTH GLEDHILL
RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

BEHIND THE SCENES attempts to defuse a potential row between Britain's two main church leaders were under way last night after a claim that the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Basil Hume, is privately "contemptuous" of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey.

Cardinal Hume has written an impassioned letter to Dr Carey refuting the claim and pleading: "We must not let others drive wedges between us."

He adds: "I am particularly sorry about this because I have always valued your friendship and kindness towards me." Dr Carey has reciprocated in kind.

The allegation will fuel speculation over the state of relationships between the two denominations in the wake of the defection of hundreds of Anglicans to Roman Catholicism after the ordination of women priests. The claim is made by the Tory MP Ann Widdecombe, a prominent lay Catholic, in a new book, *Basil Hume: By His Friends*, serialised in *The Times* from

today. Ms Widdecombe, herself a convert, admits that no trace of any contempt for Dr Carey has been publicly discernible. But writing of the Cardinal, she says: "Those who know him say his attitude to George Carey verges on the contemptuous in private."

Ms Widdecombe is one of 24 people to contribute to the book, published by HarperCollins and edited by Carolyn Butler, who was, until recently, a press officer with the Catholic Media Office. Ms Widdecombe says of the Cardinal: "He can be cross and crusty, gentle and endearing, tough and uncompromising, sensitive and diplomatic. He hates rows. Perhaps sometimes he hates them too much."

Book extract, page 19



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MPs resume the Questions farce with unaccustomed E's

IF YOU seek evidence of the chasm between MPs and youth culture, harken to an exchange yesterday between Barry Sheerman (Lab, Huddersfield) and Jack Cunningham (Con, Huddersfield). Referring to the Government's drugs strategy, Sheerman told Cunningham that "students could be targeted with E's". Or that's how it sounded. Whether Hansard records it as "E's" or "E's" will tell us how streetwise their reporters are.

Early days, perhaps, for

nominations for the Best/Worst/Silliest of 1999 Awards, but Prime Minister's Questions yesterday at Westminster (where Government backbenchers allowed by the whips to ask questions are now sitting together, probably for protection) produced some strong contenders.

This sketch's Best Heckle nomination goes to Dennis Skinner, who, after a spluttering denunciation of Government policy by Paddy Ashdown, shouted "Sack 'im!" to the Prime Minister. Both the Labour and the Tory benches

fell about. Ashdown tried to be rude to Blair about the NHS patients-eye view of this Government. "If you were a Labour voter..." he hissed, unwillingly reminding us of growing doubts on this question.

Blair seemed unfazed by Ashdown's rudeness. Now the two men sit together on a Joint Cabinet Committee, suspicion arises that the Liberal Democrat Leader may have penned a little note to Downing Street yesterday morning: "Dear Tony, I'll have to be a bit rough with you this after-



MATTHEW PARRIS
POLITICAL SKETCH

noon. Please don't take this personally - I've got to keep the lads on-side. Your pal, Paddy."

"Dear Paddy. Message understood. And I may have to be a bit rough, in reply. My lads are restive too. Cheers - and no hard feelings. Tone." Our Luckiest Escape nomination goes to Peter Mandelson, who wasn't even there.

But William Hague's spirited try at stirring up the story of his resignation veered off-track yesterday. Faced with the choice of piling on the agony over the Health Service, and piling on the agony over Labour's internal feuding, the Tory Leader simply couldn't make up his mind. So he tried to raise both, feebly linked. Ready for a massive frontal

assault on either, Blair did choose. He avoided the Mandelson question, preferring to answer on the NHS. Hague's charge faltered amid a hail of statistics and counter-statistics about nurses.

Then a Tory, Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cotswold), resumed the Mandelson attack. But still Mandelson's lack of belief in Clifton-Brown's double-breasted jacket and looked like a clown. His doubtless brilliant question sank in the hilarity.

The Flattest Joke nomination?

To the Prime Minister, whose only response to Tory attacks on ministerial misconduct was a parboiled sneer at Michael Portillo: What really would upset him, he replied, would be if any ministers made a television programme about trains in Spain. As Portillo is not a minister, and Mandelson is rumoured to be planning a video documentary of himself doing charity work in Tanzania, it was hard to see the point of this joke. Even poodles failed to laugh.

And finally to our Teacher's Pet nomination. To Hazel

Bleas (Lab, Salford), who is fast emerging as Mr Blair's Number One Little Ray of Sunshine. Yesterday the perky, petite and relentlessly blithe Mrs Bleas shared with Mr Blair her sorrow that "little-tattle and gossip" about his Cabinet were all the media cared for, instead of "the important issues." She cited one of these "old people and young disaffected teenagers working together in gardening projects in Salford."

A relieved Blair turned away from little-tattle to embrace the significance of this

Kidnap Briton flies home after ransom deal

FROM DANIEL MCGRODY IN ADEN AND STEPHEN FARRELL

JOHN BROOKE, the British oil worker kidnapped in Yemen, was on his way home last night after a secret ransom deal was agreed with tribesmen.

After holding the 46-year-old for five days, his captors handed him over to negotiators, including one sent by his American employer, Halliburton. Mr Brooke was flown by helicopter to the British Ambassador's residence in Sanaa, where he had a long telephone conversation with his wife, Katherine, who was at their farmhouse near Norwich.

Last night Mrs Brooke, 45, said she was very happy to learn that he was safe. Her husband's first request, she disclosed, was to be told the result of Norwich City's First Division match with Crewe Alexandra last Saturday. Mr Brooke's local team lost 3-2.

Mrs Brooke said: "He was wondering what the score was as he sat in captivity in the desert on Saturday. I couldn't remember because I was excited that he was released."

Mr Brooke, who has worked in Yemen for 12 years and escaped a previous kidnap attempt, told the Ambassador, Victor Henderson, that the



Brooke was kidnapped by Yemeni tribesmen

was enormously relieved to have been freed, and described his kidnappers' treatment of him as "very generous and considerate". He said he had never been threatened.

Armed men forced their way inside the guarded compound in the province of Marib late on Saturday. Mr Brooke was initially worried because he thought he had been grabbed by Islamic terrorists in revenge for the arrest of five Britons accused of a bomb plot in Aden, but his captors reassured him that they had no links with Islamic extremists and said they wanted to swap him for one of their tribesmen who had been jailed for murder and sabotage.

Mr Brooke said he did not

know what the deal was to free him, and usually in such cases the precise details are never known and there are seldom arrests. One diplomatic source said: "Everyone is so grateful to see a happy ending that no one asks too many questions."

Mr Brooke, who is to arrive back in Britain today, told British officials that, after grabbing him at gunpoint, his abductors had driven for five hours to a village hideout close to the Saudi border. There he was sheltered, given regular meals and kept informed by his abductors about efforts to free him. They told him of London's insistence that no force should be used.

The five Britons being held in Aden will soon be charged with plotting terrorist attacks. Yemen's Ambassador to Britain said last night. After confusion prompted by his remarks that the men had already been charged with "bombing in Yemen" and connections to the gang who kidnapped British tourists, Dr Hussein al-Amri was called to a meeting with Baroness Symons, the Foreign Office Minister, to provide clarification. A Foreign Office spokesman said: "The Ambassador has told us his understanding is that no charges have been brought, but he expects them to be brought shortly."



Laurence Whitehouse yesterday with some of the children from the school where his wife was a teacher

Widower opposes death penalty

BY RICHARD DUCE

FRIENDS and family yesterday said their final farewells to Margaret Whitehouse, one of the hostages who died in Yemen, in the tranquil surroundings of a private school in Hampshire.

There was no bitterness, only words of fondness and respect for the popular primary school teacher who was shot as she knelt to comfort another hostage during the bloody shootout between her kidnappers

and the Yemeni security forces three weeks ago. Her husband Laurence, leader of the kidnappers, was shot as he arrived at Lord Wandsworth College for a gathering to celebrate the life of his wife.

Mr Whitehouse said that if he were asked by the Yemeni court to decide the death penalty, "I don't believe in capital punishment, it's barbaric and inhumane. To execute him would turn him into a

martyr and that would probably fuel his movement. I think he needs a very long time in jail. My wife would have shared that view."

Earlier Mr Laurence had attended a private cremation service near his home, accompanied by close family and friends as well as some of the hostages who survived the kidnapping. Mr Whitehouse 54 also a teacher, from Hook, Hampshire, said: "She died in the way she lived, helping others."

Death wish on Britons

Continued from page 1
yesterday. Hours before the case began, snipers positioned themselves on the court's ornate balconies while squads of police sheltered under the palm trees of every major intersection, stopping cars at random.

As Hassan arrived, soldiers crouched behind heavy machine guns bolted onto the back of pick-up trucks and sealed off all approach roads. The accused, who stood in a wooden dock decorated with plastic imitation pandan, had been given new shirts for their first public appearance and Hassan was allowed to wear the leather pouch that carries the Jambiyah - a traditional curved dagger, which had obviously been removed.

Judge Najib al Khadiri, in on Hassan took little interest, sat on a raised dais with three armed guards behind him. He wore a black robe embroidered with the scales of justice and a green sash.

Hassan, however, preferred to chat to people in the front row rather than to pay any at-

tention to the official proceedings. He claimed to have had "contact with groups outside Yemen", but said that he knew none of the five Britons whose release from jail he is said to have demanded in exchange for the 16 hostages.

Hassan nodded when I asked if he knew of Abu Hamza al Masri, the Muslim cleric based in North London, but denied that his Supporters of Sharia organisation had planned bombings in Aden. Al Masri has admitted to talking to the kidnap gang, but Hassan smirked and said: "He may know me as I am a well-known fighter." He barely paused for breath as he delivered his diatribe against the West, and when the judge warned him that he would be removed if he did not desist from making political speeches Hassan sneered: "I will do this my way, not yours."

His look bored as he recalled how he planned the kidnap, only the night before and said that he had ambushed the first cars "carrying Christians"

that came along. He admitted using the hostages as human shields and described the moment when Mrs Whitehouse and Andrew Thirkel were shot by one of his men, the Egyptian Osama al Masri.

"When Osama knew he was going to be killed he shot two hostages. That was his last moment. With his last breath he was going to do his best. He did it for God. My pistol jammed. If I could have shot more I would have done so."

Hassan tried to concentrate the other two in the dock, but Hassan interrupted their attempts to speak. At one stage when Hassan felt he was not the centre of attention, he demanded that proceedings be halted so that he could pray. He looked furious when, in the middle of another diatribe, the judge stopped the hearing and said he wanted further investigations and the arrest of the rest of Hassan's gang.

Hassan was anxious to know when his next court performance would be, but police banded him out of the dock.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Chile joins Pinochet hearing

The Chilean Government was granted permission to take part in next week's re-hearing of the General Pinochet appeal in the House of Lords. A panel of three law lords took five minutes to decide to allow Chile to present its case that, under international law, it enjoys state immunity from intervention in its internal affairs. "The law lords also announced that Lord Woolf, the Master of the Rolls, had removed himself from next week's appeal panel because of objections by General Pinochet's lawyers to his links to Amnesty International. Another unnamed law lord on the panel had declared remote links with Chile, but there had been no objections from the parties involved in the case."

Ashworth salary

Justice Miles, the chief executive who presided over the disgraced regime at Ashworth Special Hospital, has continued to draw her £71,000 salary since her resignation in 1997. It emerged yesterday that Mrs Miles, who was severely criticised by the Fallon report this week, remains under contract to the Merseyside hospital until March.

Jail for air rage

Timothy Adams, 50, of Farnborough, Hampshire, was jailed for 12 months at Isleworth Crown Court after admitting that he hit a Virgin air stewardess, breaking her nose, and spat at two others in a drunken rage when he wanted to smoke on a US flight.

Officer rewarded

An RUC sergeant covering one of the toughest republican areas of Belfast has won the national title of community police officer of the year. Sergeant Stephen Jones, 41, was chosen for his work in running a police unit in the Markets area of the city.

Under offer

The girl who devised a new code for sending secret messages by computer was yesterday considering offers from leading universities Cambridge, Trinity College Dublin and Liverpool. Sandra Flannery, 16, from Blarney, Co Cork, is to publish her work.

Better by degrees

A pet cat was treated in Weymouth, Dorset, to remove the remains of a plastic toy thermometer lodged in its rear. A young girl had been given a toy vet's set for Christmas, and is believed to have learnt her technique from watching TV vet shows.

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Disabled reject benefits plans

BY ALEXANDRA FREAN, SOCIAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT

DISABILITY rights groups yesterday attacked government plans to force all new welfare claimants to attend an interview with a personal adviser or forfeit state aid.

While welcoming the government's pledge to provide greater help to disabled people wanting to work, campaigners questioned whether the advisers would have sufficient training and skills to assess the capabilities and needs of disabled people.

They also doubted whether personal advisers would be able properly to evaluate the full implications - and costs - for an employer hiring a person with a disability.

The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation said that the Government did not appear to appreciate that paid employment was simply not a realistic option for many disabled people.

There are 5.8 million people of working age with a disability,

but only 42 per cent of them have a job, compared with 80 per cent of the non-disabled population.

The Royal National Institute for the Deaf questioned whether the £80 million that the Government has allocated to test the scheme in 12 pilot areas would stretch to providing professional sign-language interpreters for deaf people.

Duke Al-Jarrah, the RNID's welfare and benefits policy officer, said: "Even where there are jobs, disabled people tend to be put at the back of the queue by employers because they have higher support costs and companies might not be prepared to take that on."

A government spokesman said that recently bereaved people and those who were obviously too disabled to work would not be required to attend interviews.

Leading article, page 21

Hague attacks hospital crisis

BY JILL SHERMAN, CHIEF POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

WILLIAM HAGUE lambasted the Prime Minister yesterday over the NHS winter crisis, claiming the situation had worsened as a result of political feuding between ministers.

As Tony Blair struggled to reassert his authority during the first Commons clash between the two men this year, Mr Hague blamed long waiting lists, bed cuts and nursing shortages on the Government's failure to get its priorities right.

"While the NHS has been in crisis, personal funds have taken the place of political principle and personal loans have taken the place of political priorities," Mr Hague said.

In reply Mr Blair gave his strongest hint yet that nurses were in for a big pay award as he said they would be "properly rewarded" to address recruitment and retention difficulties.

Downing Street later refused to discuss figures, but

agreed that there was a need for a settlement that "is welcomed by existing nurses and to attract future nurses".

Mr Hague, taking the high-risk option of fighting on traditional Labour territory, accused Mr Blair of cutting back on the number of nurses in training and putting huge burdens on short-staffed hospitals.

Mr Hague said: "What we have seen in the last few weeks is intensive care bed availability at the lowest ever, we've seen doctors and nurses under even more pressure than before."

But Mr Blair insisted that the Government had put in more than £2.5 billion extra into the NHS since it came into office and a further £2 billion would be spent from April. He claimed the problems in the health service had been inherited from the Tories and were being dealt with by Labour.

King picks up £7m purse in battle of boxing promoters

British fight organiser shares jokes with wild-haired former partner after judge agrees contract deal

THE heavyweight legal fight between the boxing promoter Frank Warren and his flamboyant American partner Don King was settled in the High Court yesterday with a £7.2 million payout to Mr King.

Britain's "Mr Boxing" agreed the settlement to make a "clean break" of their four-year partnership. The two men were in court, sitting a few feet apart, to hear Mr Justice Lightman agree the settlement.

The judge had ruled in March last year that there was an agreement that the two men would jointly promote British fighters, including Prince Naseem Hamed, the featherweight world champion. Mr Warren was therefore in breach of the duties he owed to Don King Promotions.

Mr King's spokesman, Peter Wilson, said at the time that the ruling meant that the contracts worth millions with all the boxers concerned were owned by the partnership. Thus, with the winding up of the partnership, Mr Warren would have to buy out Mr King's 50 per cent stake "at a cost of tens of millions".

Mr King said after the short hearing yesterday that he did not regard the result as a victory.



Warren said he would dine on soup in a basket

ry and he was "still very fond" of Mr Warren. "Life goes on," he said.

Mr Warren said it was "cheap at the price" to settle the longstanding dispute. He had the money to pay Mr King, but would be dining tonight on "soup in a basket", he said.

His remarks revived memories of his difficulties after the collapse of the London Arena, the Docklands sports and entertainment complex, that failed in 1991 when Mr Warren lost more than £3 million but saw off the threat of personal bankruptcy.

The promoters shook hands outside the court and swapped jokes about their differences. Under the agreement Mr Warren acknowledged his obligation to pay Mr King in recognition of his rights as a partner under the boxing partnership and publicly withdrew all the allegations that he had made against Mr King and his company.

According to Mr King's lawyers, Mr Warren has agreed to sell his house if necessary to make the first of a series of agreed payments.

Outside court, Mr King commented: "My reputation is most important to me and the vindication of my rights both here and in America. The justice system here has given me justice and I am very happy."

But he said he was not gloating over a victory. "I am very fond of him and will continue to be," Mr Warren then tried to persuade Mr King to buy him a meal and said that the settlement was "cheap at the price".

"I am free," Mr Warren said as he descended the lift from the courtroom. "I am glad this is all behind us, but it looks as if I shall be eating soup in a basket tonight."

Mr King added: "I have fought long and hard in the English courts to vindicate my reputation and my rights in the partnership which I made with Frank Warren and from which both he and English boxing derived great benefit."



Despite the smile and cigar yesterday, Don King was not gloating. He said that Frank Warren was still a friend

On every occasion when the court was required to give a ruling about my rights in this dispute, I have been 100 per cent successful, and the Court of Appeal upheld those rights in December.

"By Frank Warren's withdrawal of his allegations and his agreement to pay me in accordance with my entitlement, my reputation has been up-

held. I am therefore very happy at the outcome of this case. I am glad that I can now put this unhappy episode behind me. The British people are warm, congenial and are tremendous boxing fans; I do not intend to abandon them."

Mr King said that he "fully intended" to continue promoting British boxers and to "give them opportunities in the box-

ing arena". He said that was why he had formed a partnership with Mr Warren and he would continue on that course, particularly with boxers who needed promotion.

One of the biggest bones of contention was a claim by Don King Productions Inc (DKP) that it was entitled to a share of all profits made by Mr Warren during the part-

nership from British and European fighters, including Hamed.

Asked yesterday whether he would still set up fights for Hamed in the US, he replied: "Naseem is a very good fighter. I will speak to him if he were to ask. The UK guys need a commitment and I will give that commitment to help those who are less fortunate."

Cliff killing 'was revenge for abuse'

By A CORRESPONDENT

A man abused as a child took revenge more than 30 years later by throwing his tormentor over a cliff to his death, a court was told yesterday.

Christopher Thomas, 32, told police that he nearly changed his mind as Edwin Wilcox began to pray on the top of Culver Cliff on the Isle of Wight. But he said that Mr Wilcox had prayed for himself instead of his victims, so he had killed him.

Anthony Donne, QC, for the prosecution, told Winchester Crown Court that the body of Mr Wilcox, 64, had never been found. But he said that from the day of the alleged murder, none of his friends or relatives had seen him. He had not been back to his flat, no money had been taken from his bank account and his Giro benefit cheques had not been cashed.

Thomas, a labourer, of Newport, Isle of Wight, denies murdering Mr Wilcox, from Ryde, last January.

Mr Donne said that Mr Wilcox was a promiscuous and eccentric homosexual with a criminal record. He was a Portsmouth Football Club fan and the only trace of him had been a blue and white supporter's scarf found halfway down the cliff.

Mr Donne said: "According to what Thomas told police and other people, he pushed Mr Wilcox over the cliff. Why? Because Eddie Wilcox had abused him sexually when he was young and this was a revenge killing for being one of the people who he said had ruined his life."

Mr Donne said that Mr Thomas, who was put into a children's home at the age of eight, had been sexually abused by Mr Wilcox in his teenage years. Later, he had sexual relationship with the older man in return for money.

Mr Donne said that 12 days after Mr Wilcox had disappeared, Mr Thomas went to the home of Sonia Hackett, a former social worker at a children's home where he had been a resident.

He told her he had seen Mr Wilcox in a fish and chip shop and recognised him as someone who had abused him when he was younger. "Miss

Hackett couldn't believe what she was hearing and thought he was winding her up." When he said he was not, he described luring Mr Wilcox to the cliff and pushing him over. Miss Hackett asked where the body was and he replied that it had been a dreadful night, very stormy, and they would never find him.

"He offered to take her up to the Downs and she could see the drag marks on the cliff." She had not believed the story, she saw a report in a local newspaper about a missing man named Eddie Wilcox, she went to the police.

Mr Donne said that Thomas told police: "I threw him over the cliff because he would not go over."

"If you want to go up there I'll show you. There is a skidmark where I had to drag him down."

Mr Donne said that later Thomas had told police that Mr Wilcox had abused him from the ages of 11 to 16. On the night of the killing he had waited outside Mr Wilcox's home and offered to take him for a drive.

Mr Wilcox had become frightened as they drove to the cliff. When they arrived, Thomas asked him how many other boys he had abused and Mr Wilcox had replied six.

Mr Donne said Thomas told police: "He asked: 'Do you hate me and are you going to kill me?' I said 'Yes. The world needs to be free of you.' And at that stage Eddie Wilcox screamed."

Mr Donne said that Mr Thomas was asked would he still have pushed him over the cliff if he had said a prayer for him. "He replied: 'Not about me. I didn't care about me. He had shown no remorse for what he had done to me or other people. So I dragged him down by his feet and threw him over.'"

Mr Thomas had said that he hated Mr Wilcox but would probably have spared him if he had prayed for his victims. He told police that he was surprised how calm he felt afterwards. He had gone home, made a cup of tea and had a good night's sleep.

The trial continues today.

Foster girl's father plans to launch custody battle

By CLAUDIA JOSEPH

THE natural father of one of the two girls missing with their foster parents plans to fight for custody of his daughter, Jade, he said yesterday.

Paul Duckett announced he wanted to look after his daughter just 24 hours after his former girlfriend, Jackie Bennett, who is the natural mother of Jade, five, and Hannah, three, decided to offer the runaway foster parents her support.

In a change of heart, after Jeff and Jenny Bramley pleaded in an open letter to newspapers to be allowed to adopt her daughters, she admitted she understood their motives.

However Paul Duckett, 24, a computer businessman, who has barely seen his daughter since she was a baby, condemned the Bramleys, who today have been fugitives for four months.

He said: "This is a terrible crime. They cannot be allowed to get away with kidnap. They cannot continue to receive the public sympathy they are getting. If anyone else did it they would be hunted the length and width of the country and would be public enemy number one."

"The children need stability, they have obviously had a difficult time. They went to foster parents because they needed

that stability, they needed friends, they needed education. They're just not getting it. I want the children to be returned to start with and then my initial aim is to get Jade out of care and probably apply for residency."

Mr Bramley, 35, who worked as a postal worker, and his wife Jenny, 35, disappeared with the girls from their home in Ramsey, Cambridgeshire, on September 14, the day they were due to hand back the girls into local authority care.

They had been fostering the sisters since March and wanted to adopt them but, after several

meetings, social workers decided they had "inadequate parenting skills" to meet the special needs of the two children. Although there was no suggestion of any abuse, the couple were understood to be too strict with the children, denying them a bedtime drink at night and spoon-feeding them, although they could feed themselves.

There was also concern about an unwillingness to allow the girls to keep in touch with people from their past and a reluctance to let them see previous foster parents.

Finally, on August 19 last year, the couple were given formal notification to return the girls. Two weeks later their adoption application was rejected and they began meticulously planning their getaway.

Mr Bramley telephoned in sick, the couple withdrew their £5,000 savings and they drove away from their home.

The couple were backed by Miss Bennett, 24, who wrote a letter to *The Express* asking them to give up their lives as fugitives in return for withdrawing her opposition.

She said: "I did plan to try to get my children back with me but since reading your letter I have changed my views. I will be contacting my solicitor straight away to see if there's anything I can do."

It was disclosed yesterday that Mr Bramley had lied about his past on his application to become a foster parent in 1996 by denying any previous involvement with social services. Social workers discovered three months ago, after the couple disappeared, that Mr Bramley had spent five weeks in a care because he was a persistent truant. That would not automatically have disqualified him from becoming a foster parent but it would have prompted further investigation into his background.



Jackie Bennett, mother, and Paul Duckett, Jade's father

Leading article, page 21

'Sick' surgeon was at grand prix

By SUE LAPPAMAN

A SURGEON who treated private patients while on sick leave from the NHS has lost his claim for wrongful dismissal. Gareth Sockett, 50, also jetted off to the Monaco Grand Prix then missed a week-long conference in Harrogate, claiming it was too far to travel with his bad back.

The Royal Surrey County Hospital in Guildford sacked Mr Sockett from his £50,000 consultant's position on July 16 last year after discovering that he had treated private patients just hours after he walked out of a clinic claiming he was too ill. Hospital managers found he had five separate sessions while on two days of sick leave which he took immediately before and after his trip to Monaco.

An employment tribunal in Croydon yesterday was told that Mr Sockett, a specialist in maxillo-facial surgery, which deals with facial deformities, was absent in total from May 12 until May 31 last year. He left for Monaco on the evening of the last day of his registered sick leave, May 21, using one day's holiday and a weekend for the three-day pre-booked trip. When he returned, he failed to attend a week-long conference for which he had been granted study leave, claiming it would be too painful to drive there.

Jeff Faulkner, the hospital's chief executive, told the tribunal that Mr Sockett should then have told the hospital he was available for work. He said: "Although there were no NHS clinics or operating sessions set up for him, there would have been a lot of trauma incidents to deal with. He should have been assisting junior doctors."

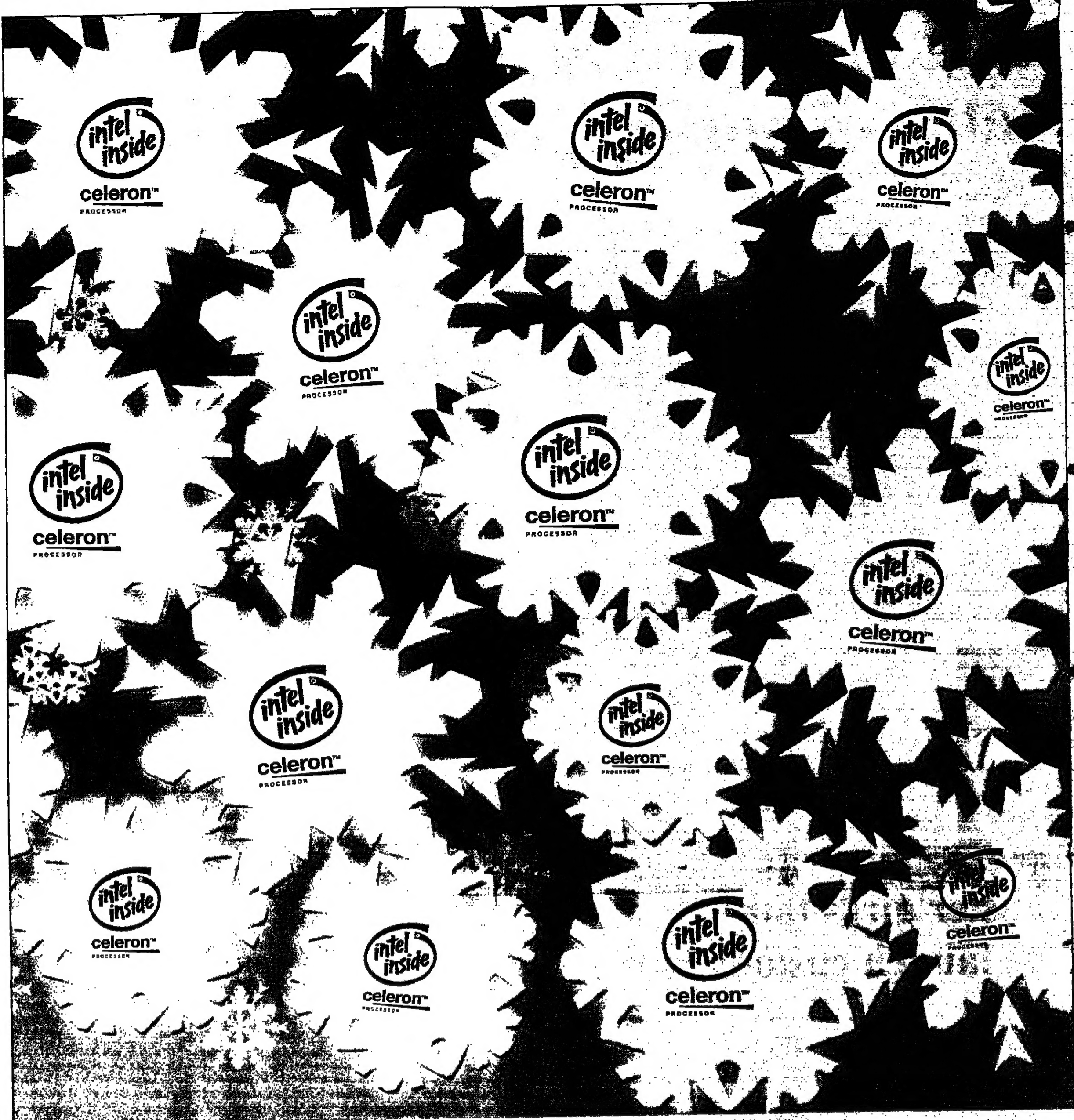
Mr Sockett, a father of four from Epsom, Surrey, said that he managed to make the trip to Monaco, but was too ill to travel to Harrogate. "The race lasted an hour or so and I watched it from the balcony of a friend's flat, not from the stand. I was moving around and chatting to people rather than standing in one place."

He said that a stand-in secretary filled in the sick leave forms incorrectly, which led to the mid-up with the hospital. But the tribunal chairman, David Milson, said: "They are entitled to enforce strictly that consultants do not work in private practices when they have ongoing NHS commitments."

Salvatore Ferragamo

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'Riot squads' to restore order at child prison

Officers from adult prisons will use batons to defend themselves against detainees, **Richard Ford** reports

PRISON officers in full riot gear will be sent into quell future disturbances at Britain's first child jail under plans drawn up by the Home Office. Jack Straw wants "tornado teams" of helmeted officers dressed in protective clothing and armed with batons to be on standby to deal with 12 to 15-year-old troublemakers at the Medway Secure Training Centre in Kent.

The officers, fully trained in using tough control and restraint techniques on adult prisoners, be called in from jails on the Isle of Sheppey and in Rochester in the event of a major threat to overall control. Mr Straw's plan was disclosed on the eve of today's publication of a damning report into the running of the centre, which is managed by Rebound, a subsidiary of Group 4. The move is a further erosion of the progressive philosophy which underpinned the centre. It was originally based on the concept that persistent young offenders should be treated as children in need of education and training, not punishment and restraint.

But as *The Times* disclosed in December, the centre was left in turmoil after a series of small riots forced the authorities to overhaul their approach in an attempt to restore discipline.

The inspection report of the purpose-built centre is highly critical of the frequency and extent of restraint techniques used by staff on youngsters at the centre during the early months of its operation last year. It will also criticise the regime provided to youngsters and the amount of time they were secluded in their rooms.

Management and staff at the centre are also criticised for serious failings and their

naivete in dealing with some of the country's most disturbed teenagers.

The training provided to the 100 staff at the centre, which holds detainees at a cost of £2,400 per head per week, is also condemned by the report of the Social Services Inspectorate, which visited the centre in the autumn.

In spite of the strong criticism of the centre, Sue Clifton, the director, is to remain in her job. No other staff at the centre, where more than £100,000 has been spent replacing and repairing facilities damaged by inmates, are to lose their jobs.

Mr Straw has decided that prison officers should be used to deal with disturbances at the centre following a riot in June in which 11 of the residents ran amok. Staff were forced to seek safety from the young offenders before police in full protective gear were called to restore order.

But Mr Straw's plan to allow prison officers in riot gear to be used to end future disturbances has provoked opposition from senior officials in the prison service, the Prison Governors Association and the Prison Officers Association.

Richard Tilt, the director-general of the prison service, and his deputy, had expressed reservations about the plan and, prison governors have questioned the legality of prison officers being allowed use control and restraint techniques on children.

The Prison Officers Association has also expressed alarm at the effects of the techniques and at the public's reaction to prison officers being drafted in.

Mark Healy, chairman of the Prison Officers Association, which is to meet Home Office officials about the plan

later this month, said: "We have got real concerns about fully trained prison officers applying control and restraint methods on what are effectively children."

Prison officers can pin prisoners to the floor, hold them in arm locks and also use batons to defend themselves. Rebound is forbidden under the terms of its contract from using arm, neck or wrist locks on the children at the centre.

The Medway Secure Centre currently holds 30 inmates. It has room for 40, but its population was reduced in November when the Home Office ordered urgent improvements to staff training and refurbishments to the building to ensure a high standard of care, control and education.



"Tornado squads" from adult prisons will be used to end major disturbances at the Medway Secure Training Centre

Science discovers just why bees do it

By Nigel Hawkes
SCIENCE EDITOR

PROMISCUITY works for the bumble bee, scientists have found. By increasing genetic diversity, it protects colonies against attack by parasites.

Honeybee queens typically mate with 10 to 20 or more males on their nuptial flights. This seems surprising given the time and energy it expends.

Boris Baer and Paul Schmid-Hempel, of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, report in *Nature* that colonies from bumblebee queens inseminated with sperm from specially bred workers with high genetic diversity were the least affected by parasites.

The same would not be true for human beings, where diversity is insured by the fact that a single female is not responsible for giving birth to an entire population. By helping the spread of sexually transmitted disease, promiscuity in humans is more likely to worsen health, not improve it.



Jobs on the line: Tracy Brisbane, left, and Lily Ainslie

Woollen mills prepare for US cashmere war

By Shirley English

CASHMERE and bananas may not appear to have much in common, but a trade war over the fruit threatens to destroy the economy of a small mill town in the Scottish Borders.

While Europe and America argue over banana imports, the people of Hawick, where nine in ten manufacturing jobs are dependent on the knitwear industry, are bracing themselves for huge job losses.

The United States, in retaliation for European Union quotas favouring Caribbean bananas, is preparing to impose sanctions on cashmere products and certain other European imports. The cashmere industry has been targeted by the US for an increase in import tariffs from 6 to 100 per cent.

The knitwear industry in the Borders claims an increase in size would result in up to a 1,000 job losses - a quarter of the knitwear workforce - and a loss of business worth £20 million.

Cashmere was named along with 16 other randomly chosen items, including batteries, handbags and windscreen wipers, for the new tariffs in a list published last December. Since then the industry has made strenuous efforts to plead its case with America and the EU. Half of all European cashmere and 90 per cent of

British cashmere comes from the Borders.

The World Trade Organisation agreed this week to set up a panel to review the situation and is due to report back in March. But the cashmere industry says that will be too late.

Campaigners, including local MPs and the Scottish Cashmere Association, want the US to remove cashmere from the list immediately. Two Borders MPs, Michael Moore and Archie Kirkwood, have called on Tony Blair to write to President Clinton over the issue.

Mr Moore, who was in Washington yesterday to brief US Government officials, said: "The trade war is a serious threat to the Borders and yet the dispute has nothing to do with the area."

The dispute could not have erupted at a worse time for cashmere: the bulk of American orders for the Autumn market are negotiated in January and the row is already having an impact on local knitwear firms. Arthur Rennie, factory manager at Clan Douglas, which employs 120 people in Hawick, said: "If these sanctions go ahead the Scottish cashmere business will die."

Tracy Brisbane, 19, who works for the firm, said: "If the mill closes I'll have to move away from Hawick."

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Exterminated Doctor Who lives again

BY ADAM SHERWIN

DOCTOR WHO has cheated time again to make a surprise reappearance. Thirty years after the last print of a much sought-after 1965 episode was thought to have been exterminated, *The Lion*, starring William Hartnell, the original Doctor, has materialised in New Zealand.

The BBC risks embarrassment when it releases the programme on video later this year. It is not Daleks that challenge the Doctor's wit but Islamic warriors. The BBC wiped the programme from its archives in 1969 and banned its distribution to Arabic-speaking countries.

Bruce Grenville, a film buff who stumbled across the 16mm print at a film collectors' fair in Auckland last year, loaned the print to the BBC for restoration.

It is content worried BBC Worldwide, the corporation's commercial wing, which expected to make a large profit from general video sales. Now it is being aimed at *Doctor Who* collectors as one of the 110 "lost" episodes.

The Lion was the first episode in a four-part drama, *The Crusade*, written by David Whitaker, the series' first script editor. Julian Glover played Richard the Lionheart.

In the missing episode, the Tardis lands in Syria during the Crusades. The Doctor teams up with the Crusaders to rescue his assistant, Barbara, who has been captured by the Persian despot Saladin.

Steve Cole, the BBC's *Doctor Who* project range editor, said: "It is especially unusual this story has turned up, because it was not widely distributed abroad. The depiction of Arabic warriors is not acceptable today."

The actors have quite clearly "blackened up" for the parts. The sensitive subject matter ensured that it was not distributed to Arabic-speaking territories.

The BBC said that the episode was destroyed because it



Hartnell pits his wits against Islamic warriors

had "exceeded its commercial value", along with hundreds of other black-and-white programmes, as colour television was introduced. There are no plans to screen it on television.

The BBC believes that it sent a copy to the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation in 1967, but, although the censor approved the episode, it was not screened. Mr Grenville bought the print cheaply from another collector who was unaware of its rarity.

The discovery of *The Lion* is the first time that a complete missing episode has been recovered since 1991, when all four episodes of *The Tomb of the Cybermen* were found in Hong Kong. Internet sites were buzzing yesterday as enthusiasts of the science fiction series debated the importance of the little-seen episode.

Douglas Sutherland, a *Doctor Who* expert who has seen the episode, said: "It would probably be offensive to Arabic countries. Saladin was actually a very decent man, by all accounts. The historical accuracy is not great, but it is still excellent news for fans."

Alexandra, Looseley-Saul, manager of the Who Shop International in East London, the largest emporium in *Doctor Who* memorabilia in Britain, said: "It's like winning the lottery, and the phone hasn't stopped ringing all day."

The print is being prepared for video release by the BBC's *Doctor Who* restoration team.

Steve Roberts, a member of the team, said: "It is a little bit battered, but we hope to restore it to something like its former glory. It's heartening to know there still are some full episodes out there."

The original print will be returned to Mr Grenville, who intends to auction it. Bids of up to £5,000 are expected from collectors.

The Lion is not quite the most valuable lost episode. Mr Sutherland said: "Tenth Planet is the one we all want. It has the first regeneration of the Doctor, from William Hartnell to Patrick Troughton."

Doctor Who was first aired in November 1963. The children's series quickly gained a cult audience, but, after seven Doctors, the corporation said that the costs of a high-quality science-fiction series were not matched by the ratings. It axed the series in 1986.

Winslet given a dressing down

BY HELEN RUMBLOW AND GILES WHITTELL



Kate Winslet in high street style...

KATE WINSLET has been told to throw her entire wardrobe overboard by an American who named her yesterday as the third worst-dressed woman in the world. The actress, equally at home in haute couture and high street grunge, is in need of fashion rescue, according to the notorious Mr Blackwell. He described her style as "gaudy" and "creaky", and said that the *Titanic* star was in a "fashion panic".

Winslet may take comfort from the fact that Madonna, the singer who launched numerous fashion trends, is at No 2 in the list. The pop star is a "glitzy gargoyle", according to the Beverly Hills fashion consultant who has been compiling the list for 39 years.

Top position went to Linda Tripp, the most reviled woman in America since her recording of President Clinton's telephone calls with Monica Lewinsky. Mr Blackwell, who has declared his first name passed, said Ms Tripp resembled a "shaggy sheepdog in drag" and had blundered

into her own "Stylegate". British style experts came to the defence of Winslet, who gathered up the folds of her ornate Alexander McQueen gown for a pub knees-up after her wedding. She dressed down for her engagement announcement, wearing jeans and large grey jumper.

Mark Holgate, fashion features editor at *Vogue*, said that she had natural élan. "There is a cultural gap going on. She is an actress who is focused on giving a good performance, rather than being surrounded with a West Coast coterie of stylists and publicists ready in case the paparazzi should strike."

One other British woman was singled out for ridicule: Alex Kingston, a star of the television series *ER*. Mr Blackwell said that she was in need of emergency fashion restoration.

The list in full: 1, Linda Tripp; 2, Madonna; 3, Kate Winslet; 4, Carmen Electra; 5, Courtney Love; 6, Mariah Carey; 7, Marisa Tomei; 8, Sigourney Weaver; 9, Sandra Bullock; 10, Alex Kingston.



...and in haute couture for her wedding

MISSING, PRESUMED LOST IN TIME

THE BBC has announced that it has found a missing episode of the science fiction series *Doctor Who*. The episode, *The Lion*, was first broadcast in 1967 but was thought to have been destroyed. It was found by a collector in New Zealand. The episode shows the Doctor and his Tardis in Syria during the Crusades. The Doctor teams up with the Crusaders to rescue his assistant, Barbara, who has been captured by the Persian despot Saladin. The episode was banned by the BBC in 1969 because it was thought to be offensive to Arabic countries. It is now being prepared for video release by the BBC's *Doctor Who* restoration team.

Al Fayed tilts at 72ft phone mast

BY SUE LAPPAMAN

MOHAMED Al Fayed has launched a High Court battle to have a mobile telephone tower near his estate in Surrey torn down. The 72ft mast was erected by Mercury Personal Communications after Tandridge District Council granted it planning permission in July last year on the basis that there was no health risk.

Ian Croxford, QC, for Mr Al Fayed, yesterday asked the High Court to order the council to reconsider its decision because it had not taken into account recent scientific evidence that suggests mobile phone base stations may pose a health risk.

Neil King, for the council, said: "The granting of planning permission was wholly consistent with the proper consideration of the material that was before the committee at the time."

The hearing continues.

Officer in appeal to the Queen

BY GILLIAN HARRIS
SCOTLAND
CORRESPONDENT

AN ARMY officer is to appeal to the Queen after he was ordered yesterday to resign or be sacked for writing an unauthorised pamphlet, accusing the Army of class prejudice.

Major Eric Joyce was called before his commanding officer at army headquarters in Aldershot to be told to resign. He has two months to leave before being automatically discharged.

Major Joyce, who has 20 years' service, said that he intended to raise a Queen's Petition, which allows members of the Forces to appeal against rulings by commanding officers. "If it is a meaningful process, I will pursue my case," he said. "If the Queen simply refers it back to the Army Board then it would be a waste of time and I will take my case to the European Court of Human Rights."

Major Joyce, 38, who serves with the Adjutant-General's Corps, breached Queen's Regulations in August 1997 when he wrote an article for a Fabian Society pamphlet accusing the Army of sexism, racism and elitism.

He said yesterday: "Sometimes it takes people to challenge convention."

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Beatings that make a mockery of peace

Martin Fletcher meets two angry victims of paramilitary punishment

SIX masked IRA men burst into Noel Diver's house last Saturday, pulled the 24-year-old from the sofa and beat him with baseball bats and an iron bar. It was several minutes before they realised that they had the wrong house and the wrong man.

They left without a word, went next door, seized 22-year-old Michael Brennan, and offered a running commentary as they smashed his limbs.

"Wait till you hear this one break," one shouted as he swung a baseball bat down at Mr Brennan's arm. "You're a big man now," said another as they left their victim groaning on his kitchen floor.

This is the story of everyday life on one of the many housing estates in Northern Ireland where republican or loyalist paramilitary groups rule through terror, where the police venture only in armoured Land Rovers, and where neither the ceasefire nor the Good Friday accord have made a jot of difference.

Punishment beatings are commonplace and, like most forms of summary justice, they are often inflicted on the innocent. There have been at least 16 in the first two weeks of this year, not to mention half a dozen shootings and numerous exiles. The only difference in this case is that Mr Diver and Mr Brennan have dared go public. "I don't care. What more can they do to me?" Mr Diver said. "They're scum."

Mr Diver lives with his partner and child on an overtly republican estate in Strabane, Co Tyrone. The Republic's flag flutters from lampposts. English street signs have been re-

placed by homemade ones in Irish, and there is a stone memorial to an IRA "volunteer" killed by "Crown forces". The walls are daubed with graffiti proclaiming: "RUC - May You Burn in Hell" and "RUC Scum Out". Here the IRA keeps a car, but with a brutality that is every bit as bad as that of which it accuses the police.

Mr Diver was alone and watching television when the IRA men, wearing black masks and bomber jackets, kicked in his front and back doors at about 6pm. Four be-

ings were in front of the fire with their nine-month-old baby boy, and she threw herself on top of him to protect him.

One of the IRA men grabbed the baby's arm and threw him on the sofa. Mr Brennan told Denise to get off him for her own safety, and three of the men dragged him into the kitchen. A fourth kept her in the living room, where she heard every blow.

"I had to listen to it," she said. "I heard him screaming and begging them to stop."

was lying in front of the fire with their nine-month-old baby boy, and she threw herself on top of him to protect him.

Mr Brennan, who is unemployed, said that the paramilitaries ordered him to leave the estate months ago, but that he used to sneak back to see his girlfriend and their two children. Beatings are usually meted out for "anti-social behaviour", such as drug-dealing, theft or defying the paramilitaries, but he said that he had no idea what he had done wrong. He called his attackers "scumbags".

To Mr Diver, Mr Brennan and their partner, the peace process is an irrelevance. "It's changed nothing as far as I'm concerned," said Denise.

The statistics bear her out. There were 237 beatings, shootings and kidnappings recorded last year, and the rate has significantly increased in 1999.

The attacks are a blatant breach of the Good Friday accord by loyalist and republican groups whose political representatives now sit in the Northern Ireland assembly. The Government and the Province's political leaders regularly condemn the attacks, but no attempt has been made to sanction those representatives. The thugs themselves are rarely, if ever, caught.

"Wait till you hear this one break," one shouted as he swung a baseball bat down on Mr Brennan's arm

gan beating him while the other two ran upstairs.

"They kept saying, 'Where is he? Where is he?'", recalled Mr Diver. "Who? Who? Who? I kept shouting. Then the two men came down the stairs and one shouted to the rest of them, 'We have the wrong boy.' They just stopped and went next door. They didn't say a word." As they left, they ripped out the telephone cord.

"I was thinking, 'What am I getting this for? I was terrified. I've never been so scared in all my life. They never told me who they were. They just beat me,' he said.

Next door, Mr Brennan and his partner, Denise, Mr Diver's sister, heard the commotion. Denise looked out of the window and saw the men running up her path. They kicked in the front door. Mr Brennan

They beat him for about 15 minutes. When they had left, he was chalk white, lying in pain, his arms just dangling". Both Mr Brennan and Mr Diver were taken to hospital. Mr Diver had a broken ankle and severe bruising on his legs, but was discharged on crutches that night.

Mr Brennan had multiple fractures to both arms and a smashed left elbow. He required one operation to reset the bones, and a second for a skin graft. His thighs and calves are still covered in blue-

Australian PM rebuffs Adams

AUSTRALIA'S Prime Minister yesterday ruled out meeting Gerry Adams and belittled his role in Northern Ireland's peace accord. John Howard said that David Trimble and John Hume were the real heroes, as they had foregone violence all along.

Mr Adams, the Sinn Féin president, was barred until recently from entering Australia and will arrive there on February 15 for an eight-day visit in which he will meet a number of political figures.

Mr Howard's fellow conservative, Jeff Kennett, the Premier of Victoria, who will meet Mr Adams in Melbourne, said it would have been "charlitz" to refuse an invitation. The Foreign Minis-

ter, Alexander Downer, also indicated that he would be happy to meet Adams if invited, as will the Opposition Labor leader, Kim Beazley. However, a spokesman for Mr Howard formally ruled out a meeting and said that the Prime Minister regarded Mr Trimble and Mr Hume as the heroes of the peace accord. "The Prime Minister would be honoured and privileged to meet either or both of them if they came to Australia. They foreswore violence all along and were recognised as such with the Nobel Peace Prize."

A spokesman for Mr Adams said that he was willing to meet anyone who wanted to see him, but he would not lose any sleep if Mr Howard declined.

Mr Howard, an avowed monarchist and supporter of a British head of state for Australia, has previously demonstrated similar opposition to South Africa's President Mandela. South Africa is one of the few important trading partners of Australia that Mr Howard has not visited and Mr Mandela has not been to Australia during Mr Howard's rule.

Australia formally acknowledged the IRA ceasefire and Mr Adams's contribution to the peace talks when it granted him a visa last November.



Howard: he has also opposed Mandela visit

Crimes by girls rise tenfold

By ALEXANDRA FRIAN

THE number of teenage girls with criminal convictions has risen tenfold in the past 30 years, according to a report on the changing fortunes of youth.

The study, commissioned by the Variety Club of Great Britain, a children's charity, shows that, although the majority of juvenile crime is still committed by boys, it is rising much faster among girls.

Between 1949 and 1996, the conviction rate among boys aged ten to 17 almost tripled from 1,857 per 100,000 to 5,400 in England and Wales. Among girls, the rate rose from 137 per 100,000 to 1,500.

Over the same period the total number of young people found guilty of a crime rose from 65,600 to 179,300.

Roger Smith, head of policy at the Children's Society, said that much of the increase was probably because there were more police. Moreover, as more police insured their property, there was a greater incentive to report burglaries. "It is also true to say that there is more to steal today," he said.

Resentment at 'morning after' calls

By HELEN RUMBELOW

MORE than a third of hospitals refuse to give women emergency contraception because casualty doctors do not see it as a priority, a report says today.

A survey of all 560 accident and emergency departments in Britain found that 96 per cent were often asked for emergency contraception, such as the "morning after" pill, but only 57 per cent provided it. Even among those, a fifth felt it was a misuse of overburdened resources.

Half of all the departments, which were surveyed by Babatunde Gbolade, consultant gynaecologist at St James's University Hospital, Leeds, said that there was strong opposition to the service from their staff, mostly from doctors.

This conflicts with Department of Health guidelines on reducing unwanted pregnancies. Hospitals' 24-hour service is thought to be vital in delivering effective emergency contraception, which works better if taken within a day of unprotected sex.



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Backbenchers urge ministers to behave

LP says party discipline must apply to everyone, writes Jill Sherman

Labour backbenchers yesterday urged the Government to get its act together, strongly condemning its failure to adopt a strict discipline as its MPs.

A packed meeting of the Labour Party, led by Peter Mandelson, urged ministers to behave in recent weeks.

It was a rare occasion when the PLP — over 200 MPs — attended a meeting, as did several ministers, including John Hogg, Alistair Darling, Ann Taylor, Margaret Beckett and Brown. Mr Mandelson, former Trade and Industry Secretary, resigned over some loan affair, and silent throughout the meeting.

One of the most outspoken was Gwyneth Dunwoody, the MP for Crewe and Nantwich, who has been at the helm for more than 30 years.

She told MPs that she supported the Government but had focused recently on individuals rather than the party as a whole.

Mr Soley, who later conveyed the same message to the Prime Minister at a meeting of the Government.



Strong words: Gwyneth Dunwoody and Clive Soley

shown by some members of the Government.

Kevin Barron, MP for Rother Valley, echoed Mrs Dunwoody's comments, saying that his own constituency party had been disillusioned by the events of the past month, which has seen the resignation of two ministers and one press aide.

Clive Soley, chairman of the PLP and a Blair loyalist, was equally critical of the Government. He said that the events of last month were the most "serious incidents" since the general election, and that counter-briefing and spinning against ministers had to stop.

Mr Soley, who later conveyed the same message to the Prime Minister at a meeting of the Government.

the Parliamentary Committee, said that it was vital to learn from the mistakes made last month.

Although there was no mention by name of any of the ministers who had been involved, Mr Soley also drew attention to the exemplary behaviour of the PLP, which had imposed its own self discipline after 18 years in opposition. "We expect the Government to do the same," he said.

Mrs Dunwoody said that she opposed any coalition with the Liberal Democrats or other relations between the two parties. John Prescott, who has made clear that he shares the same view, remained silent. Mr Soley said that while he did not support coalition,

he could see nothing wrong with working with the Liberal Democrats in areas of common interest.

Mr Soley used his later meeting with Mr Blair to press home MPs' concerns that Mr Mandelson should not return too quickly to government. Senior figures in the party argue that it would be highly damaging to the Prime Minister if he was seen to rely too heavily on Mr Mandelson and that it was vital that he publicly distanced himself from the former minister. Mr Soley believes that Mr Mandelson should not return to government before the next election.

Later, Paul Flynn, MP for Newport West, echoed his colleagues' warnings that Mr Mandelson must not be allowed to return too soon. "The party has been bruised and our reputation has been damaged by this incident," he said.

"Nobody wants to have a witch-hunt against Peter Mandelson personally. He has been a very able minister and has contributed a great deal to our party. But that impression of sleaze is there and he has to have at least a couple of years on the backbenches, and one hopes that that is a very fruitful period," he told BBC Radio 4.

Jack Cunningham, the "Cabinet enforcer", insisted that there was no chance of Mr Mandelson making a swift re-



Chided: Peter Mandelson leaving the Commons yesterday

turn. "I don't think he's going to be back in the Government in the near future and those people who write those stories in the newspapers are just misleading not only Labour backbenchers, but the public as a whole," he said.

Lord Shore, a Cabinet minis-

ter in the last Labour Government, also criticised the decision to allow Mr Mandelson to meet a German politician last week as a personal representative of Mr Blair. He dismissed the Government's defence that Mr Mandelson had been acting in a party capacity, rather than a Government capacity.

In fact, he was meeting a German who was a minister and, therefore, the appropriate person to meet that minister was a minister. Lord Shore said.

"This is too early, frankly, and the rehabilitation of Peter Mandelson isn't in his interests, nor I think in the interests of the Prime Minister."

Testing the waters for Byers and sellers

The resignation of Peter Mandelson has been examined from almost every angle, and, curiously, from the most direct one: his legacy at the Department of Trade and Industry. During his five months there, he raised the profile of the department and the morale of its civil servants, in the process earning praise from many businessmen. He put substance into the Blairite rhetoric about creating a new relationship with industry.

That presents an intriguing challenge for Stephen Byers, the new Trade and Industry Secretary in less than 19 years. He shares the modernising agenda of his predecessor and is the very model of the New Labour minister. But he is not as well known nor as close to the Prime Minister as Mr Mandelson.

Mr Byers is likely to be cautious in the short-term. He has already been careful to ensure that any decisions resulting from the inquiry into Geoffrey Robinson will be taken by Sir Michael Scholar, his Permanent Secretary, although Mr Byers will answer to Parliament.

Mr Byers is keen to be seen as a team player, working closely with his former departmental bosses, Gordon Brown and David Blunkett, as well with Alan Milburn. His first big decision has been to endorse one of Mr Mandelson's last decisions on the Fairness at Work proposals on trade union law. After looking at the latter's statement on December 17, Mr Byers decided that it would be more trouble than it was worth to reopen the agonisingly crafted compromise package on compensation and recognition. He has now told John Monks of the TUC and Adair Turner of the CBI of his view. Mr Byers

sees the Competitiveness White Paper, published a few days before Mr Mandelson's resignation, as a good modernising statement. But it left open a number of questions: for instance, a consultative paper will come out shortly on whether mergers should still be decided by ministers. Expect to see a greater linkage between competition and a package to help consumers.

Mr Byers is also interested in developing policy on science and updating the skills of those in work. The Government package last year to help preserve jobs in the coal industry was essentially a holding exercise and further decisions will have to be taken on energy policy to promote competition.

Mr Mandelson was out in front in the debate about when and how, rather than if, Britain joins a single currency. Mr Byers is in the pro-European camp, but is likely to be tactically more cautious for the time being. His priority is helping business deal with the launch of the Euro this month, and, at present, he still sees decisions on British entry coming after the general election.

There is a tricky phase for the Government during the next few months as Germany, holding the European presidency for the first half of the year, pushes proposals on tax harmonisation. This has already affected the tone of some comments by businessmen about Europe. Mr Byers is unlikely to be as much of a high profile campaigner on Europe as Mr Mandelson.

Mr Byers has risen fast so far by being the quintessential Blairite. He is above all determined to show that the New Labour agenda has not stalled — and that means keeping the DTI in the public eye.

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Cabinet stands by its man in Welsh contest

BY ROLAND WATSON AND VALERIE ELLIOTT

TONY BLAIR is to spearhead a Cabinet drive to boost the profile of Alun Michael, the Welsh Secretary.

It comes amid serious concern in Downing Street that Mr Michael is failing to make ground on Rhodri Morgan in the race to become the Principality's First Minister.

The Prime Minister will be joined by John Prescott and Mo Mowlam. They will speak to the party's rank and file in Wales over the next 48 hours with Mr Michael by their side.

Gordon Brown is expected to visit in the next fortnight. More than 100 senior members of the Welsh Labour Party are due to attend a drinks reception in No 10 tonight.

Mr Michael faces a critical test of his leadership chances on Saturday, when the AEU becomes the first big union to choose between him and Mr Morgan. However, since he took over from Ron Davies in October, the party hierarchy is alarmed at the lack of evidence that Mr Michael has closed

the huge gap between him and the maverick Mr Morgan.

With five weeks to go, Mr Michael suffered a serious blow with the announcement of the departure of his most senior civil servant, Rachel Lomax, permanent secretary at the Welsh Office, is to take up a new post in the Department of Social Security. She had previously insisted that she intended to "see through" the creation of the Welsh assembly and to become its first permanent secretary.

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MPs condemn waste of cash in care budgets

By IAN MURRAY, MEDICAL CORRESPONDENT

CONFUSION, duplication and fragmentation of health and social services means elderly and disabled people are failing to get the care they need and scarce resources are being wasted, according to the House of Commons Select Committee on Health.

Calling for an end to the "tribalism" between the two services, the committee says in a report published yesterday that charging for home visits probably costs more than it collects and that the best way forward is to integrate the two services with a joint budget.

Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, has admitted that a "Berlin Wall" exists between health and social services.

The report says: "This confusion is epitomised by the farcical question of whether a person needing a bath should receive a 'health bath' or a 'social bath' — the first comes free, the second (in theory at least) has to be paid for on a means-tested basis." In one authority area the riddle of the bath had been solved by declaring that all washing above the waist was for social reasons and all washing below the waist was for health reasons.

At present, health care is provided free of charge through the NHS, while social care in the home has to be paid for if a patient has money. Local au-

thorities are assumed to be able to raise 9 per cent of the cost of home care through charges, but the figure varies across the country from nothing to 23 per cent.

"Current charging policies create perverse incentives, including cost-shifting between agencies," the report says. "It is arguable that charging, particularly for domiciliary care services, is having a detrimental effect on potential collaboration between agencies, which more than outweighs the benefits of the revenue. We believe the charging regime will always be a barrier to some people accessing services."

The committee calls for a survey to be carried out urgently to find out what the impact of charges is on the NHS and to look into the implications of abolishing them altogether. One consequence was that hospital patients who were fit enough to go home could not do so because home care could not be arranged. Relatives who would have to pay for care in the home wanted the patient to stay in the hospital for free, though the hospital urgently needed the bed.

The committee found that, in the first quarter of this financial year, 6,000 people over 75 were in hospital because discharge could not be carried out for "bureaucratic rea-

sons", rather than because they were too unwell to go home. Terminal cancer patients were often unable to leave hospital for up to 26 days because of the difficulty in putting together a social services package for them.

David Hinchliffe, chairman of the committee, and the Labour MP for Wakefield, said that there was a pressing need for national criteria to assess care needs in order to stop people in different parts of the country being treated in different ways.

The NHS Confederation said that it did not agree that the health service should make long-term investments in local authority services. "NHS funding is made available by Parliament for health and health services, not social care," said Stephen Thornton, its chief executive.



The pygmy hippopotamus, which weighs 7.8kg, was born last month by Caesarean section. Its mother died during surgery

The hippo that is a bit of a handful

A BABY pygmy hippopotamus went on show for the first time at Whipsnade Wild Animal Park yesterday.

The orphaned animal, which is four weeks old and weighs 7.8 kilogram, loves nothing more than a warm bath and a tickle behind the ears, according to her keeper, Cliff Tack.

"It's wonderful to have this youngster here and I'm looking forward to her growing up within our breeding programme," he said. "She's a thirsty little thing and loves her milk."

Veterinary surgeons performed an emergency Caesarean section on her mother, Valeria, who died during surgery. Her offspring will be named by fundraisers shortly.

Pygmy hippos, which are found in West Africa, are an endangered species. Officials at the park in Bedfordshire hope their specimen will be part of a Europe-wide breeding programme.

Winter heat kills last Ice Age frog

By NICK NUTTALL, ENVIRONMENT CORRESPONDENT

A WHOLE species was declared extinct yesterday after the death of Lucky the pool frog at the weekend.

No other native example of *Rana lessonae*, believed to have survived in Britain since the last Ice Age 10,000 years ago, has been seen in the wild since Lucky was captured in 1993, and experts believe it was the last of a line.

It means that Britain has now only one species of native frog, the common frog or *Rana temporaria*. Charles Snell, an amphibian expert at Greenwich University, who was looking after Lucky, who is believed to have died of old age, said that the warm winter had been a disaster for the male pool frog.

"Warm winters are not good for hibernating frogs



Lucky: the last of his kind

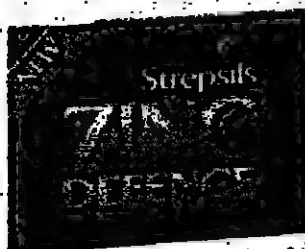
and he kept waking up, which was very bad news," he said.

The pool frog is fairly common on the Continent. Over the past 150 years its only stronghold in Britain has been small pools in Norfolk left over from glaciation.

Lucky was captured by a Norfolk naturalist who managed to breed him with European females. One hope is to try to breed back the British pool frog from continental offspring. "All is not lost. I do have pool frogs with British genes in them," Dr Snell said.



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included	included	included	£200	n/a
included	included	included	included	included
included	£245	£210	£300	£240
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Santer's velvet touch fails to smooth MEPs

Man who lacks the Machiavellian instinct could not sense the storm brewing, writes Charles Bremner

IF JACQUES SANTER, President of the European Commission, were not such an incurable optimist, his team would probably never have come close to the political guillotine that they faced in the Strasbourg Parliament yesterday.

The failure of the genial Luxembourg to measure the gravity of the crisis which began brewing at the Parliament last December was typical of a man who has little of the Machiavellian instinct and a tendency to overlook flaws in people.

Mr Santer's nature as an un-

threatening, decent sort was just what John Major wanted when his veto against Jean-Luc Dehaene of Belgium catapulted the then Luxembourg Prime Minister into the throne of the departing Jacques Delors in 1994. Two years before the "mad cow" crisis, Mr Major hailed his choice as "a safe pair of hands".

However, Mr Santer's "exceptional optimism", as it was called by Gaston Thorn, an earlier Luxembourg Commission chief, has been a handi-

cap for the captain of a drifting vessel with a fractious crew of big political egos.

Rather than an avuncular *primus inter pares*, the Commission needed a firm hand to whip the 17,000-strong enterprise into shape and rid "the House", as it is known, of the odour of malfeasance. "Santer is out of touch and does not seem to realise what is going on in his shop," a senior Brit-

ish MEP said as the EU's institutional crisis staggered towards resolution last night.

Mr Santer's misjudgments in the Parliament's crisis began in December when he challenged it to "back him or sack him" when it rejected the Commission's accounts. The risk-making was compounded by Pauline Green, leader of the dominant Socialist bloc, when she resorted to a dangerous play in which she called a motion of censure and dared MEPs to vote for it. Passage by a majority would automatically sack the Commission.

This week Mr Santer man-

aged to rile the assembly further with a bland speech that contained concessions but did little to show that he understood the depth of public indignation over malpractice and corruption in his administration. A chorus of "he just doesn't get it" could be heard in all 11 languages of the Union. A day later, on Tuesday, he came close to political suicide by saying his honour required him to resign if the Parliament voted for the sacking

of his two most tainted colleagues: Edith Cresson of France and Manuel Martin of Spain.

The tight-knit team of Luxembourgians around Mr Santer, 61, say he has done well, given the restrictions of the office and the wishes of the member Governments who run the Union. For a start, the Brussels executive is a collegial body in which the President has no power over his 19 colleagues, who are appointed by their Governments. Mme Cresson, a former French Prime Minister, was hardly likely to take orders from a modest Luxembourgier. Mr Santer also points out that much of the worst sleaze now under discussion was bequeathed to him by M Delors, who was famous for neglecting management while pursu-

ing his historic vision. Queasy after their federalist rush at Maastricht, the Governments were happy with the bumbling style of the man known as Monsieur Santer, a sociable type and devotee of good food and drink. In office, Mr Santer has lived up at least par-



Kosovo hostages deal averts the threat of Serbian offensive

EIGHT Yugoslav Army soldiers held hostage by ethnic Albanian guerrillas were released yesterday, with the Albanians winning an extraordinary concession from the Serb authorities. In a secretive deal with international monitors, it was agreed that nine Albanian fighters should be freed later next week.

William Walker, the head of the ceasefire verification mission in Kosovo, said that for the moment at least the possibility of a new Serb offensive had been avoided.

KLA has won a surprising concession. Tom Walker reports from Likovac

But for five tense hours yesterday in the remote central Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) headquarters of Likovac, the ambassador and his team cut gloomy figures.

The day did not start auspiciously for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), one of whose vehicles slipped off the muddy track lead-

ing to Likovac, while the convoy bringing Mr Walker became lost. A bloody corpse dumped on the main road outside Pristina hardly helped to raise spirits. Journalists and international officials alike were then for some reason directed by the KLA down a track known as one of the most deadly in Kosovo.

The OSCE, whose chairman

Knut Vollebæk, the Norwegian Foreign Minister, had been distinctly upbeat about the hostage release on Tuesday night, became increasingly uneasy as the hours ticked by in the derelict village, which was burned by Serb forces in a counter-offensive in the late summer. "It's bloody ridiculous what the Albanians are asking for," said one source.

While the talks dragged on, the international media and the less important ranks of OSCE did their best to stay warm and sustained

themselves with tea and spicy beef-burgers in the local KLA cafe. The guerrillas completely surrounded the village, and expelled journalists from the Serb state news agency, Tanjug.

When the deal was at last announced in the gathering darkness, Mr Walker was reluctant to be drawn on any concessions made to the KLA. However, sources close to his organisation admitted that the Serb authorities had agreed to release nine KLA fighters, one of them a 17-year-old girl,

captured on the border near Prizren last month. That the Serbs should free prisoners who were recently heavily armed and uniformed insurgents — the Army killed 36 of their colleagues — seems almost unfathomable, and several diplomats were sceptical that a very Balkan exchange can pass without further trouble. According to the Yugoslav army, the hostages — eight conscript soldiers, three of whom were from Montenegro — were released as soon as the deal was fixed in the

northern mining town of Kosovo Mitrovica. Communications were maintained with the rebel captors throughout the day by KLA satellite telephone.

□ Tirana: The Albanian Parliament approved legislation aimed at stemming the illegal exodus of people across the Adriatic Sea to Italy by dinghy. The new law took effect immediately. It bans boats of less than 70 horsepower further than two miles from the coast unless they advise the border police first. (AP)

Refugee wave set to break on German border

FROM ROGER BOYES IN ZITTAU

TENS of thousands of Kosovo Albanians, the vanguard of a new European refugee wave, are waiting in Czech boarding houses and farmsteads for their chance to slip through the forests into Germany, and into euroland.

The town that is taking the strain is Zittau, the end of the German railway line, Saxony's most remote southeastern corner. There, everybody is feeling the pressure of the distant Kosovo war. On euroland's frontier are the taxi drivers of Zittau who, in a remarkable token of the country's increasing fear of illegal immigration, are being arrested and jailed for picking up any strangers who look like Kosovans.

About 300,000 people from former Yugoslavia used Germany as a haven during the Balkan wars of the mid-1990s and administered a shock to

the system, giving fresh wind to right-wing extremists, sparking tension in local communities. Asylum rules have been tightened and a new German Government echoes the sentiment of the Kohl administration: the boat is full.

The Saxony-Czech border is a neutral zone, points Kosovans who have paid about \$5,000 (£3,300) each — their life savings — to "people smugglers" regard it as an easier crossing than the traditional route across the frozen Oder and Neisse rivers dividing Germany and Poland to the north.

"The focus of illegal immigration has shifted from the Polish to the Czech border," says Bernd Walter, head of the eastern section of the German border police. His 500-mile territory covers most of the German border with the Czech Republic and Poland. Nearly 18,000 "illegals" were arrested

last year, 13,000 of them close to Zittau. At least 40,000 evaded his grip.

Twenty thousand Kosovans have taken shelter in Bosnia; tens of thousands more are making their way into Austria. But it is here along the craggy, snow-capped foothills and valleys of the Lausitz mountains that the professional "people smugglers" are pushing hardest.

Quite simply, Germany is seen as Europe's most comfortable berth. The number of border guards has been trebled to 2,000, their fast patrol cars, camouflage vans and snarling dogs are part of the local scene.

The surly faces of the taxi drivers reveal more, however, than the slight swagger of the frontier guards with their secure jobs, pensions and smart uniforms. For the drivers have — in a move quite unprecedented in Europe — become foot soldiers in the war against illegal immigration.

If a cab driver in Zittau, or anywhere else on the border, picks up a foreigner who later turns out to be an illegal immigrant, he can be jailed. In the Zittau region 22 out of 73 taxi drivers are being investigated on charges of assisting illegal immigrants and six have been jailed for terms between 12 and 26 months.

The local chamber of commerce advises taxi drivers to avoid foreign-looking passengers who appear to be wet or carrying luggage. Even though I am blond, blue-eyed, carried no bag and was entirely dry, my Zittau driver wanted to check my passport before letting me into his car.

He was right to be suspicious. Later in the day we were stopped by a frontier guard patrol which did not much like the look of my British passport or the lack of an up-to-date resident permit.



Melandri: "Culture is a national asset, our equivalent of oilfields or diamonds."

New culture chief seeks to change Italian mentality

Minister aims to wed arts and technology writes Richard Owen in Rome

THREE years after Venice's La Fenice opera house was destroyed by fire, Giovanna Melandri, Italy's Minister of Culture, has made an urgent appeal to Massimo Cacciari, the Mayor of Venice, to help to resolve legal wrangles that have halted the theatre's restoration and shattered hopes of a reopening for the start of the new millennium.

"The restoration of La Fenice should have been nearing completion by now," Signora Melandri said at her office in a 16th-century palazzo in Rome's centre. While she "could not intervene in the judicial process", she was releasing government funds in the hope that "an injection of cash will help to solve the logjam."

Three months ago Signora Melandri, 36, succeeded Walter Veltroni after the centre-left Government of Professor Romano Prodi fell in October. The appointment caused a ripple, not only because she was relatively young and inexperienced, but also because she was born in New York, speaks fluent English and, despite leaving views, moves in fashionable circles, exposing her to the charge of "champagne socialism".

She had also just given birth to Maddalena, and has since been sniped at for combining a ministerial office with breast-feeding. Just before Christmas she fell out with Riccardo Muti, chief conductor and director of La Scala Opera in Milan, for failing to attend the opening night of the new season, preferring to go to a dinner in Rome to be near her child.

But there is no doubting her dedication to "marketing Italy" for the administration led by Massimo D'Alema, head of the ex-Communist Party of the Democratic Left (PDS). She formerly headed the party's Communications Department, evolving policy on digital television and other information technologies. She admires Signor Vel-

troni, who extended museum opening hours to evenings and Sundays — a revolution in the sleepy world of arts administration. The experiment lasted six months, but Signora Melandri plans to reintroduce it in April for two years. "We have to change the mentality in this country. Culture is a national asset, our equivalent of oilfields or diamonds."

The 18th-century La Fenice — the "Jewel of Europe" — burnt down in January 1996. Donations for reconstruction poured in. A construction firm owned by Fiat won the contract with a design by Gae Aulenti, perhaps best known for her conversion of the Musée D'Orsay in Paris. But a year ago the award was challenged by the runner-up German-Italian consortium and work has been at a standstill since last summer.

Signora Melandri is keen to promote Italian architecture and "other contemporary art forms" as well as restoring past glories. She says the country is uniquely placed to market itself as the world's centre of artistic excellence.

"New technology — the Internet, CD Roms, digital television — feeds off areas in which Italy excels, including sport, cinema, music and architecture as well as the fine arts and antiquities. I want the private and public sectors to exploit this huge potential through joint funding and joint management. I don't see any harm in developing the arts and making money out of them at the same time."

Bonn set to ease citizenship laws

ABOUT four million long-term foreign residents of Germany will find it easier to gain German citizenship, according to a parliamentary Bill unveiled yesterday (Roger Boyes writes). However, candidates will have to master the German language and demonstrate that they have a clean criminal record.

The measure, which will be steered through parliament by the summer, has sparked a controversy and the Christian Democratic Opposition has taken the unusual step of launching a nationwide petition to stop or slow the legislation. The basis of German citizenship remains the 1913 blood laws in which German ancestry counts for more than

place of birth. The amended law, approved yesterday by the Cabinet, allows foreigners who have lived in Germany for at least eight years to apply for dual citizenship.

Children born in Germany to foreigners who themselves were either born there or came to the country before the age of 14 will be given German passports automatically. That applies to the many Turkish families who arrived in the 1960s and whose children attend German schools.

The Opposition says that dual citizenship encourages the creation of a parallel world in which young Turks enjoy the privileges of the European Union but keep their ethnic identity.

Britain ready to back lifting of UN oil embargo on Iraq

By JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK AND OUR FOREIGN STAFF

BRITAIN, in a dramatic shift of policy in the aftermath of last month's Operation Desert Fox, appears ready to go along with a French proposal to lift the United Nations oil embargo on Iraq, provided adequate controls can be put on Iraq's ability to develop weapons of mass destruction.

British sources said yesterday that a trade-off was likely in the UN Security Council in coming months between relaxing the embargo imposed after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and instituting a strict new weapons inspection regime.

Meanwhile, US warplanes patrolling the no-fly zone over northern Iraq attacked several surface-to-air missile installations yesterday after being targeted by Iraqi radar. US officials said. Iraqis fired at least

one missile but missed the aircraft, the Pentagon said. The incident underscored an increasingly aggressive Iraqi challenge to the no-fly zones enforced by US and British planes. President Saddam Hussein has nearly doubled his surface-to-air missile batteries and has been using them with increasing frequency to threaten allied pilots.

The UN's "oil for food" scheme, which allows Iraq to sell \$5.2 billion (£3.16 billion) worth of crude every six months to finance humanitarian imports, could be extended without an upper limit. British officials say. That would, in effect, lift the crippling eight-year oil embargo, while leaving in place a UN system to monitor oil exports and authorised imports of food, medicine

and other needed goods. Since Iraq cannot meet existing UN oil sales quotas because of the low price of crude, the practical effect would be small. But the political impact would be huge: Britain would be free of accusations that it is punishing the Iraqi people, while Iraq could claim success in riding itself of the embargo. France yesterday unveiled its proposal to lift the embargo and replace the UN Special Commission (Unscm) with an inspection regime that would monitor Iraq's weapons industries but no longer investigate its past efforts to acquire nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the missiles to deliver them. Britain's main objection appears to be that the mechanism would not ferret out existing stocks of chemical and biological weapons and Scud missiles.

Iraq's reaction remains unclear, the Iraqi leadership having refused to talk to the French Ambassador in Baghdad. Most of the Security Council are likely to embrace the proposals, fearing that a failure to make progress diplomatically could entail fresh military conflict.

□ The Hague: Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, hinted yesterday that the UN weapons inspection team might have to accept some changes before returning, but insisted Baghdad should let them in.

Meanwhile, George Robertson, the Defence Secretary, said in Sofia that Saddam was making a "suicidal miscalculation" in continuing to target US and British warplanes.

US nuclear sanctions anger Primakov

FROM ANNA BLUNDY IN MOSCOW



Primakov: says the US has threatened relations

RELATIONS between Russia and America, already strained by the Allied bombing of Iraq, took a turn for the worse yesterday when Yevgeni Primakov, the Russian Prime Minister, lashed out at the US over its decision to impose sanctions on three Russian scientific institutions that it believes are helping the Iranian nuclear weapons programme.

If the American accusations that Russia is providing nuclear assistance to Iran prove to be true, it would mean that Russia is contravening international agreements on non-proliferation.

The Russian Foreign Ministry, the Iranian Embassy in Moscow and all three institutions involved, the Moscow Aviation Institute, the Mendeleyev Chemical Technical University and the Scientific Research and Design Institute of Power and Technology, have dismissed the allegations. Last July President Clinton imposed sanctions on seven other Russian bodies for the same reasons. Controls over the export of Russian technology have been tightened recently in order to meet international requirements.

"Such strong-arm methods

are counter-productive for Russo-American relations, to which we attach great importance," Mr Primakov said, adding that he intended to raise the issue with Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, when she visits Moscow this month.

The three institutes involved in the affair said that their only contact with Iran was in the context of student exchanges, a claim backed by Igor Sergeyev, the Russian Defence Minister, who said that the three institutes lacked the necessary resources to transfer technology.

WORLD IN BRIEF

Japanese agree coalition deal

Tokyo: Japan's ruling party and an opposition group agreed to launch a coalition government yesterday after reaching a breakthrough in a dispute over security issues. The pact will help the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, which lacks a majority in the upper chamber of parliament, to pass Bills to revive Japan's economy and upgrade defence ties with the US.

Keizo Obuchi, the Prime Minister, who returned yesterday from a tour of Europe, is expected to reshuffle and reduce the size of his Cabinet this afternoon and to give a post to his party's new ally, the Liberal Party. (AP)

Kabila troops 'kill 320'

Bangui: President Kabila's troops massacred at least 320 civilians last week in the northwestern Equateur province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, refugees in the Central African Republic said. They added that the provisional toll included 120 people slaughtered in Zongo and 200 at Libenge, on the border between the two countries. President Kabila's troops hold Zongo and Libenge. (AFP)

B25 and crew found

Jakarta: The remains of eight American airmen killed in a B25 bomber crash in what is now Indonesia's Irian Jaya province in the Second World War have been found after more than 50 years, the US Embassy said. The wreckage was spotted in December 1995 by a pilot and has now been identified by the US Army Central Identification Laboratory. (AFP)

Nine die on UN plane

Paris: None of the nine people on board a United Nations cargo aircraft survived when it crashed over an Angolan battlefield on January 2, the rebel Unita group said. The Angolan Army claims Unita shot down both the Hercules C130 plane and a similar UN aircraft that crashed on December 26 over the central plateau territory, killing all 14 inside. (AFP)

Unmarried bliss

Sofia: At least 13,000 Bulgarian couples have been told they are not married after officials admitted that unqualified officials had presided at their weddings, the paper 24 Tchassals said. Two divorce petitions in the northern region of Rousse were rejected after officials noticed that the marriages had been improperly performed, the paper added. (AFP)

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Mugabe forced into U-turn on white farms

FROM JAN RAATH IN HARARE

PRESIDENT MUGABE of Zimbabwe has been forced by the International Monetary Fund to retract plans for a mass confiscation of white-owned farms.

In the next few days, the Government is to place a statement in international newspapers committing itself to a land reform programme that will be run under the rule of law, is transparent and will not destroy the commercial farming sector. The statement is meant to restore international confidence in Zimbabwe. It will have to resolve all the

confusion and collapse of farmers' morale caused by the provisional seizure last November of 841 farms, and Mr Mugabe's assertion last week that farmers will be paid "with an IOU". The agreement was reached in negotiations here over the last week between the IMF and the Government.

But sources said yesterday that the IMF had made clear to Mr Mugabe that if he strays from his undertakings in the statement the freeze on international concessional finance, that has run for nearly four years, will go on.

Diplomats are hoping that the latest round of talks will end the President's habit of making promises to effect an orderly, legal land reform process and then vowing revolutionary retribution against white farms in the next breath. Mr Mugabe has kept up the game since late 1997 when he had 1,500 commercial farms listed for nationalisation, with only partial compensation for the owners.

The economy is in its most desperate state since independence in 1980, mostly as a result of reckless political manoeuvres by the now very unpopular President. The Zimbabwean dollar fell to its lowest level yesterday, and stockbrokers said the stock exchange might have to stop trading next week after the introduction on Tuesday of taxes on all stock market transactions.

The IMF holds the key to steady the economic collapse with a \$176 million (£106 million) loan which, if approved, will unlock another \$800 million from the rest of the international community, and talks for much more. "We will recommend that we go ahead with the standby [loan]," Goodall Gondwe, the head of the IMF's Africa department, said on Tuesday at the end of the negotiations.

He said the Government had promised that, over the next two years, it will buy only 118 farms that have been offered to it for resettlement.

Journalist goes into hiding from police

Harare: An independent newspaper's reporter was in hiding from military police yesterday as his editor prepared to spend a second night under illegal detention in a military barracks here (Jan Raath writes).

Nine military police also threatened to arrest the proprietor of the weekly *Standard* over its reports by the journalist, Ray Choto, at the weekend that 23 soldiers, including seven officers, had been in jail since mid-December for urging fellow soldiers to overthrow President Mugabe. But the police beat a hasty retreat late yesterday

afternoon as a contingent of about 20 foreign and local journalists arrived at the *Standard* offices. "They are breaking every damned rule in the book," said Clive Wilson, aged 62, the proprietor. "The military is in the ascendancy because of the Congo war, and it's going to let's go for these people. This is kidnapping."

Mark Chavunduka, the editor, spent a second day in a military barracks where Mr Wilson said he was "under severe psychological pressure". A member of staff saw him and said his eyes were red and his face was swollen.



Judge Augustine Paul leaves court yesterday after allowing amendments to charges against the former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim

Prosecutors change tack in case against Anwar

FROM AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE IN KUALA LUMPUR

CHARGES of corruption against the ousted Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, were amended yesterday, shifting the emphasis from sexual misconduct to abuse of power, as defence lawyers threatened to call the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, to give evidence.

Mr Anwar, the former Finance Minister, who has alleged he is the victim of a political conspiracy, claimed the prosecution was making the amendments because it could not prove the charges. "Whatever the prosecution may say to try to explain the amendments to the charges at this late stage, the truth is crystal clear... Anwar will be vindicated," he said.

Mr Anwar, 51, is on trial on

four counts of corruption for allegedly using his position to order police to quash charges of sexual misconduct made against him by his former driver and the sister of his former private secretary.

The amended charges state that to save himself from embarrassment Mr Anwar directed police to obtain denials from Mr Aziz and Ms Umami of sodomy allegations. "The major change, if any,

refers to sexual misconduct and sodomy, which, on the reading of the [old] charges, is not really a substantive element to be proved," Judge Augustine Paul said.

The changes mean the prosecution will not have to prove that Mr Anwar did indeed have an affair or commit sodomy, but only that he used his position to influence the police to quash the investigation. The surprise move came as

the prosecution wrapped up its case in the eleventh week of the trial, with both sides set to summarise the evidence today, starting with the defence.

The defence is expected to argue that the case should be dismissed, but if the judge rules there is a case to answer, it will then begin to call witnesses, including Dr Mahathir.

Leading article, page 21



Barak's adviser raided

'Watergate' theft of file infuriates Israeli Opposition

FROM CHRISTOPHER WALKER IN JERUSALEM

A SCANDAL dubbed "Israel's Watergate" erupted yesterday over a mysterious break-in at the Washington offices of a US pollster advising Ehud Barak, the Labour Opposition's challenger to Benjamin Netanyahu in the May 17 election.

Labour members of the Knesset said that supporters of Mr Netanyahu's Likud Party were behind the burglary and Avi Yehzekel, a backbencher, called on the police to join their US counterparts in the investigation. Another Labour politician, Ophir Pines, called on Mr Netanyahu, the Prime Minister, to state that the right-wing Likud had had no part in the Washington burglary, which US detectives said had been carried out by professionals.

Even before any hard evidence emerged, conspiracy theories were quick to sweep through Israel's corridors of power.

Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, a former Labour Cabinet minister, asked his Israeli Army radio interviewer: "Who has an interest? Do the Americans? The French? The Arabs? What are we dealing with? We are dealing with an election campaign and information that any political adversary has an interest in."

Sergeant Joe Gentile, of the Washington police, said that during the night between Monday and Tuesday thieves entered the offices of Stanley Greenberg, the American pollster's expert commissioned to work for Mr Barak and Labour. Sergeant Gentile said that police and the FBI were investigating the possibility that "certain records were targeted", but he gave no details.

Tai Silberstein, who is managing

Mr Barak's electoral campaign, said that the thieves "knew exactly what they wanted because the only file taken was the one dealing with the Israeli campaign".

He told Israeli radio that the file contained information about Mr Barak's bank accounts and assets, but denied that the stolen information related to the party's election strategy, as some Israeli sources had said. Mr Silberstein claimed

that an unnamed Jewish group was responsible for the robbery.

Mr Greenberg, who did key polling work for President Clinton during the 1992 presidential campaign, has several international clients, including President Mandela.

Aliz Goren, Mr Barak's spokeswoman, said that it was necessary to wait for the conclusion of the US investigation and that it was a mistake immediately to blame Likud.

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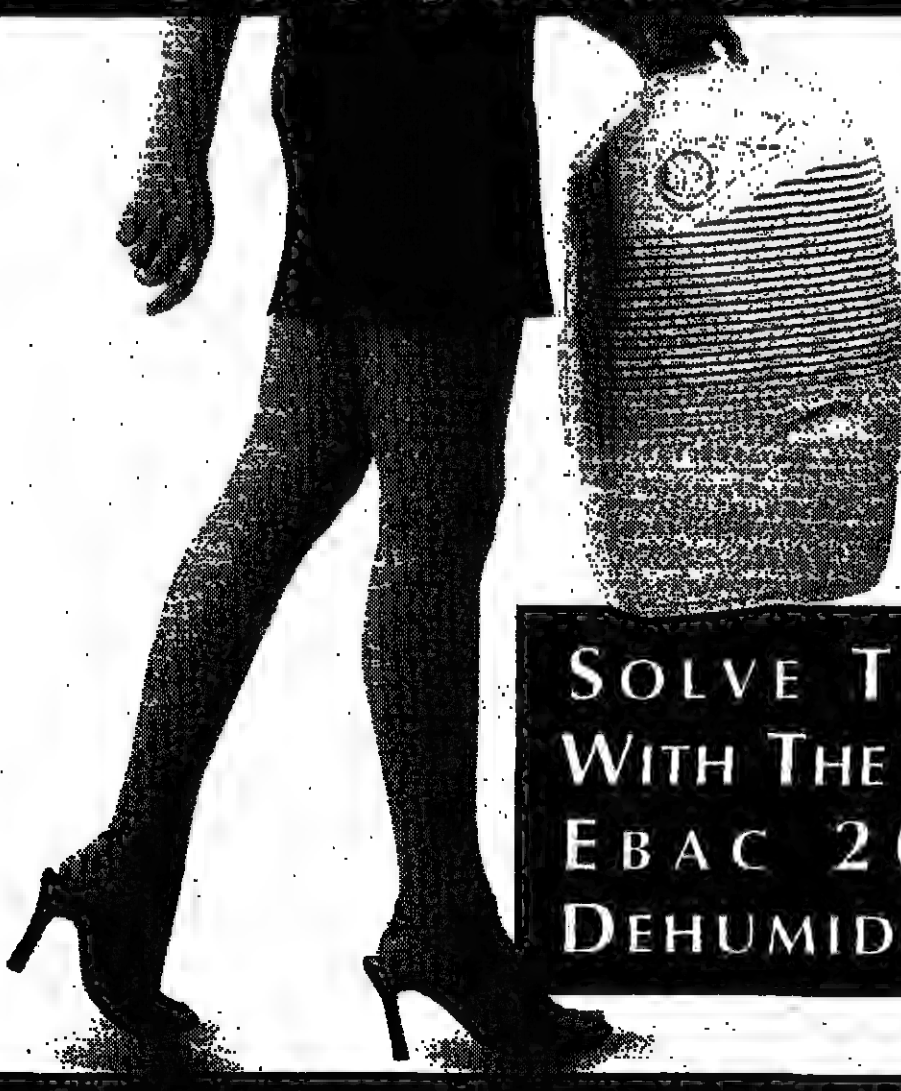
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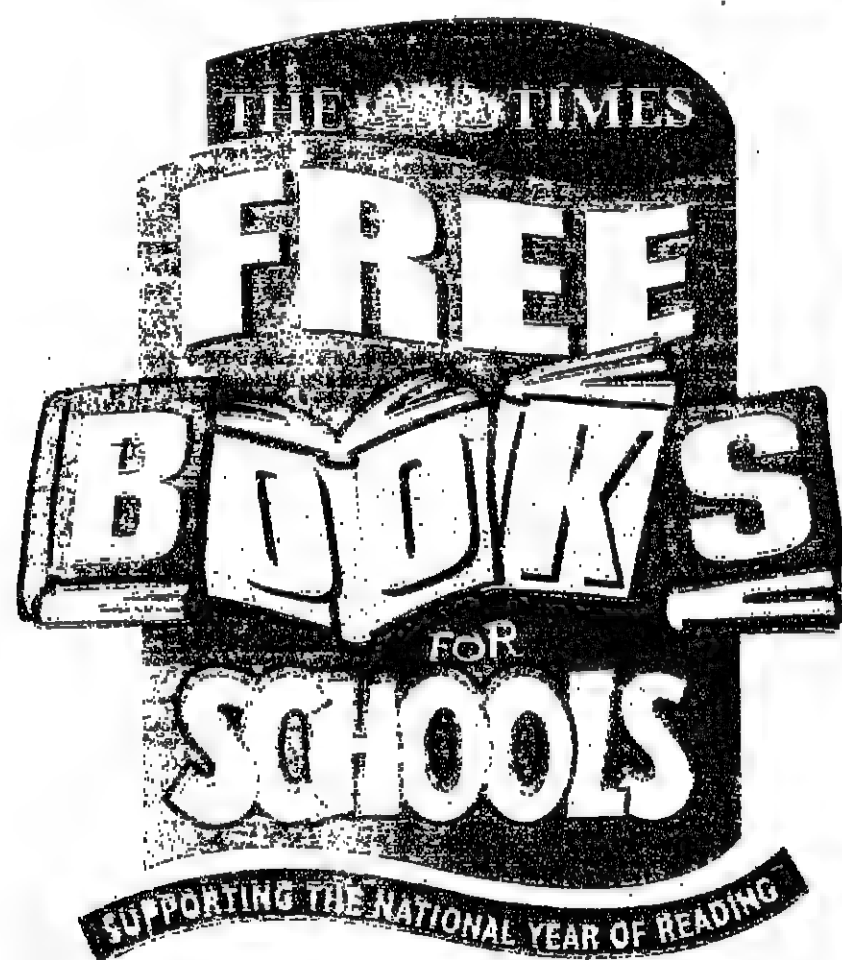
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SEE THE BACK PAGE OF SECTION ONE FOR TODAY'S TOKEN

CHANGING TIMES

FROM BRONWEN MADDOX IN WASHINGTON

Letters page 21



McGwire sending his 70th home run into the crowd

FROM JAMES BONE IN NEW YORK

McGwire's record-breaking ball went to an anonymous telephone bidder who described himself as "one heck of a baseball fan".

Other women linked to Mr Clinton have complained of intimidation. Mrs Jones was audited by the IRS after she rejected his first offer. White House aides have always denied any conspiracy to intimidate or discredit the women.

put a stop to that. They issued a stern "Furby Alert" on the spy agency's inter-office Internet. It said: "Personally owned photographic, video and audio recording equipment are prohibited items. This includes toys, such as Furby's with built-in recorders that repeat the audio with synthesized sound to mimic the original signal."

Anyone who brought a Furby to work was ordered to contact a security officer about what to do. The threat: Furby utters 200 words—100 in English and 100 in "Furbish."

[illegible]

Follow the lead of the famous



Dr Thomas Stuttford reports on prostate cancer: its symptoms, advances in treatment, and their success rate

Hughes is not the only star who has publicised the advantage of early diagnosis. When the ever ebullient Sir Harry Secombe had his usual medical check-up, his doctor didn't care for the feel of his prostate. The blood test — the PSA (prostate specific antigen), which distinguishes between the benign and malignant enlargement of this gland — together with a biopsy, vindicated his doctor's opinion.

Geoffrey Hughes, the real-life Onslow, has redressed the balance. His advocacy of measures for the early diagnosis of cancer of the prostate may save many of the 10,000 men who die from it each year, and help to bring British figures more in line with those recorded in the rest of the developed world.

Hughes has described how he attended a routine medical examination at which a trace of blood was found in his urine: apart from this he had no symptoms and the bleeding would not have been obvious without tests. Further examination — blood tests, prostatic ultrasound and biopsy — confirmed the presence of prostatic cancer. The good news is that MRI scans, bone scans, and the rest of the pre-surgical regime showed that the cancer had not spread.

As Hughes was, in prostatic surgical terms, young — only 54 — and in sufficiently good order to withstand surgery, he opted for a radical prostatectomy, the total removal of the prostate and adjacent tissue. He was up and about within 72 hours and after a holiday in

Australia feels fine — and has every intention of being around for many years.

Both Hughes and Sir Harry were symptom-free when they attended routine medicals. Their cancer was found because of tests carried out by the doctor, not because the patients were suffering from ill-health.

Cancer of the prostate is an insidious disease; by the time it causes symptoms, which disturb the patient, there is a 50 per cent chance that it will already have spread beyond the confines of the gland, and the likelihood of a lasting cure is remote.

Patients who, for some reason, do not have regular PSA blood tests should watch for symptoms that could foretell the need for urgent intervention. These include trouble with passing water, possibly a weakened flow, and urgency. There may be pain on ejaculation and blood in the urine or semen, potency may be less and the semen volume may be consistently reduced. In advanced cases, there will be pain from the spread of the tumour to the spine, ribs or other bones.

Cancer of the prostate is an insidious disease



Many public figures, such as Major Ron Ferguson, extol the benefits of early diagnosis of prostate cancer

IMPORTANCE OF EARLY DETECTION

DR RICHARD COWAN, an oncologist specialising in prostate cancer at the Christie Hospital in Manchester, said recently that when he attends conferences overseas, colleagues are astounded that 90 per cent of British cases of prostate cancer are diagnosed only at a late stage, when the men already have symptoms, compared with less than 20 per cent of patients in the rest of the developed world.

Dr Cowan is not surprised at the considerable variation in the likelihood of survival across Europe. Statistics in the *European Journal of Cancer* show that in Switzerland 72 per cent of men diagnosed with prostate cancer are likely to be alive in five years. In Germany the figure is 67 per cent. At the other end of the spectrum the UK, with a 45 per cent survival rate, joins East European countries at the bottom of the table, below Slovakia and just above Slovenia and Estonia.

Denmark has similar figures to the UK, which the Eurocare Working Group attributes to "a rather reserved attitude of Danish physicians that seems to result in limited diagnosis of asymptomatic cases". The group concludes that there are many causes for the variable results, but that the approach to diagnosis — as well as differences in treatment — play a part. America has very good results: 83 per cent of patients survive for five years. If the UK survival rate is to improve, there are three possible approaches: to prevent prostate cancer, to diagnose it earlier or to improve treatment, particularly in advanced cases.

Though it is a disease of old age, any direct relationship to diet is hard to show. But there is evidence that selenium, a trace element, and lycopene, a polyphenol found in tomatoes, significantly reduce the incidence. (Urologists can be seen surreptitiously taking tomato juice, with or without vodka, rather than gin and tonic.)

Early detection relies on two tests. A simple rectal examination, which reveals something over half of all tumours (this is how Sir Harry Secombe's was found) and the PSA (prostate-specific antigen) blood test. In the US, where 70 per cent of men can quote their PSA level, there has been a 6.9 per cent reduction in such cancer deaths. In Britain there has sometimes been a reluctance to encourage testing, even though the death rate is rising alarmingly, and the vast majority of urologists now recommend a PSA test.

Many doctors believe the PSA test is a crucial part of a middle-aged man's annual check-up, and for those over 40 if there is a family history of the disease. To judge from American and Canadian figures, early diagnosis saves lives: if a prostatic tumour goes undiagnosed, a man loses on average 7.2 years of his expected life span.

The UK survival rate ranks with those of Eastern Europe

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CHLAMYDIA IS A FACTOR IN PROSTATE PROBLEMS

IT IS not only in old age that prostate cancer causes trouble. The number of young patients with chronic inflammation of the prostate is increasing.

The *International Journal of Clinical Practice* recently reported on a survey designed to determine what proportion of patients with chronic prostatitis (inflammation) in which no bacteria could be demonstrated were, in fact, suffering from a chlamydial infection.

Chlamydia is the organism that causes NSU (non-specific urethritis) — one of the causes of the gleet (discharge) which so worried the 17th-century diarist Samuel Pepys — in men and much of the pelvic inflammatory disease, and hence infertility, in women.

Acute or chronic prostatitis in men causes pain or discomfort on passing urine, or ejaculating, a perineal ache and often back pain. Prostatitis is frequently associated with a urethral discharge and the examination of patients includes urethral tests carried out in the morning

before urine is passed in this particular survey, those patients who had an associated urethritis were excluded.

Prostatic fluid is collected by prostatic massage — a rather undignified and uncomfortable procedure — but one that enables a doctor to examine the fluid and check it for bacteria. More than 25 per cent of the men who had non-bacterial prostatitis could be shown to be suffering from chlamydia.

They were treated with 100mg of Doxycycline twice daily for 10 days, with a cure rate of 80 per cent. This dosage is rather lower than that used at the Royal London Hospital which, when I was there, administered 300mg of the same antibiotic for three weeks.

One condition frequently mistaken for prostatitis is loin and groin pain, which results from nerve-root irritation, often from a prolapsed disc of the sciatic plexus in the back. This, too, gives rise to chronic pain in the genitalia, perineum, groin and inner thighs.

When symptoms are benign

THE GOOD news is that the overwhelming majority of prostatic problems are benign.

Even better news is that whereas a few years ago any significant benign enlargement of the prostate was treated with surgery, now medical management with pills is an acceptable alternative in many early cases.

Nonetheless, surgery, TURP (transurethral resection of the prostate), a coring of the prostate as if it was an apple, is so routine that I have had patients who have returned to work within days.

The doctor asks a patient three questions: do you have to get up at night to pass urine? Is the flow slower than it used to be? Do you have any other bladder symptoms?

The symptoms of an enlarged prostate — benign prostatic hyperplasia — are divided into those caused by obstruction to the flow of urine away from the bladder and those caused by irritation of the bladder and urethral lining.

The prostate, a gland which secretes semen, surrounds the urethra, the tube leading away from the bladder. As the prostatic gland enlarges with age — as it inevitably does — it constricts the urethra in the same way as would tightening a jubilee clip around the hose leading to a car radiator.

Classic symptoms of obstruction are a poor, intermittent stream, leaving a man standing in the loo while his colleagues are back at the bar.

THIS IS often coupled with a feeling of incomplete emptying. When there is complete obstruction, the condition is called acute retention. A feeble stream and incomplete emptying suggest that surgery may soon be needed.

The symptoms of irritation of the urethra and bladder are frequency, urgency, a need to get up at night and leaking on the way to the lavatory. This latter symptom is also indicative that surgery is needed.

Vaccine therapy trial begins

IF SURVIVAL times for cancer of the prostate are to be prolonged, a means will have to be found to extend the life of those patients who no longer respond to hormone therapy. One such research project is under way at St George's Hospital Medical School in London.

The first four patients have been enrolled at St George's for a trial of vaccine therapy for patients with advanced cancer of the prostate. It will be conducted by Roger Kirby, a consultant urologist at the hospital. Up to 60 local patients will join the trial, all of whom will have ceased to respond to hormone therapy and will have a rising PSA of at least 30 — the normal upper limit is four.

Treatment involves injection of prostatic cancer cells, which have been inactivated by radiation, so that they are quite harmless. The cells are combined with a vaccine adjuvant SRL 172, which has been developed by SRL Pharma. The role of the adjuvant is to stimulate the patient's immune system so that it produces the opti-

mum response required to destroy the cancer. The cellular material is provided by Onyx, a biotechnology company based at St George's, which has already worked with Angus Dalgleish, an oncologist at the hospital.

Experimental preclinical trials with the vaccine and adjuvant suggest that the treatment will provide a significant lengthening of the patient's survival time. The system is, to some extent, based on earlier research done by Professor Dalgleish who has been working on a vaccine adjuvant therapy for malignant melanoma, with most encouraging results. There has been a fourfold increase in the likelihood of treated patients surviving for five years. Research trial telephone number: 0181-682 9994.

There will be an all-day meeting, Shaping the Future of Prostate Cancer, at the Royal Society, organised by the Prostate Cancer Charity on Monday, March 29, 1999. Inquiries: 0181-383 8124.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

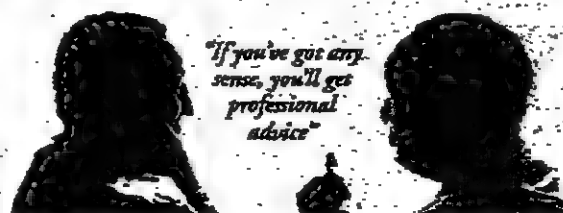
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Cross, crusty, gentle and tough

BASIL HUME

by his friends



Defender of his faith: Ann Widdecombe says that after a private meeting with Basil Hume lasting just 15 minutes, her spiritual doubts of a lifetime were overcome

In November 1992 the Roman Catholic Church in Britain faced one of its biggest challenges in its post-Reformation history. The Church of England decided to ordain women and in the process rent itself asunder. A mass exodus followed, mainly of the Anglo-Catholic wing, and largely presented itself for reception into the Catholic Church.

The Church was hopelessly ill-prepared and Cardinal Basil Hume was faced with a diplomatic and organisational nightmare. Having publicly commented that this might be the opportunity for the reconversion of England for which we had all been praying for so long he later, uncharacteristically, made a partial retraction of the word "reconversion". Many of us thought there was no need for any retraction whatsoever. Indeed, it was that very commitment to the reconversion of England which spurred him to find a solution to what was becoming known in the Catholic Church as the "Anglican problem". He preferred to see it as the "Anglican opportunity". Perhaps, also, he saw a solution to the shrinkage of vocations in the Catholic Church.

Whatever his thoughts, it is one of Cardinal Hume's greatest achievements that the transition of Anglicans to Rome was managed without detriment either to his own Church or to long-term relations with a decidedly embarrassed and not over-gracious Canterbury. It was managed, furthermore, despite a considerable amount of resistance from the Catholic Church in England and a high degree of frustration on the part of crossing Anglicans who could not, in turn, understand the obstacles being put in their way.

Early reaction was chaotic. Some Catholic bishops gave an instant welcome to the dozens of Anglican clergy who came to see them, others repulsed them with stories of seven-year preparation periods. Some laity were received in a matter of weeks (I was myself) while others, sturdy Anglo-Catholics who were almost more Roman than those receiving them, ran into demands to take the whole RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) course, which often turned out to be run by people unequipped to deal with such pupils and wholly ignorant of what they believed.

"Why do they keep talking about conversion as if we have

He can be enigmatic, irritable and stubborn — yet the leader of England's Roman Catholics is a man of true holiness who inspires a deep love. In the first of a series of extracts from a new book by his friends, Ann Widdecombe reveals the human side of Cardinal Basil Hume

only just put our totem poles in the dustbin?" one lady wrote to me at the time. Why indeed!

We can thank the cardinal and a small number of other determined bishops that the mess was so thoroughly sorted from so hopeless a beginning. Scores of vicars, most of whom were still ministering in the Church of England, regularly made their way down Ambrosden Avenue to attend Basil Hume's Wednesday evening talks and many of them were subsequently received into the Catholic Church by the cardinal's ecumenical adviser, Fa-

ther Michael Seed. My own spiritual journey was also completed by the cardinal. When I left the Church of England in November 1992 it was to find myself in denominational no man's land. I knew what I was rejecting, but not what I was going to.

For many years I had been attracted by the Roman Catholic Church, with its cohesion and its uncompromising stand in the face of fashionable scorn on moral issues such as abortion and divorce. I could not, however, ignore the very profound doctrinal reservations which lay between my-

self and reception into the Church. All received — as opposed to cradle — Catholics have to state that they believe everything the Church teaches to be revealed truth. I did not.

After endless conversations with Michael Seed, I had resolved many but not all of these reservations. In this unhappy state I was facing an Easter still out of communion with any Church. As it happened, so were thousands of other Anglicans and it was on their behalf that I went to see the cardinal. In a quarter of an hour he removed the doubts of a lifetime. The exact content of

the conversation will be forever private but it revolved around the nature of doubt and understanding. It is a pity that the cardinal cannot personally counsel 55 million people, for if he could then he would guarantee that longed-for reconversion of England.

He appears little in the media, which is doubtless why he is listened to with respect when he does; interviewers do not adopt towards him the hectoring tone often discernible with Anglican bishops.

Cardinal Hume can be cross and crusty, gentle and endearing, tough and uncompromising, sensitive and diplomatic. He hates rows. He hates them too much. He can be too keen to preserve the tranquillity of the Church when it might be better served by a resignation or two.

said bluntly, for example, that Britain could no longer call itself a Christian country when Parliament voted to extend abortion up to birth and to remove the protection of the Infant Life Preservation Act from abortion legislation. He also proclaimed, equally bluntly, that no Roman Catholic was free to dissent from Evangelium Vitae, the papal encyclical on the sanctity of life. Yet he has not been prepared to go as far as Cardinal Winning and make it a defining issue in political choice.

If he can use a blunt instrument when fighting for some causes, Cardinal Hume leads by example when promoting others. His persistent interest in homelessness and the relief of poverty is well known, less so his interest in youth crime.

Yet he makes his point on both elegantly, rather than emphatically, by encouraging the Church to address the issues directly, as opposed merely to berating politicians for their supposed failures. It is a style which might have given some other much-quoted churchmen greater gravitas had they seen fit to adopt it. It also has the virtue of increasing the pressure on politicians in a way that direct attacks do not.

A prophet is not without honour except in his own country, but it rare to hear Cardinal Hume criticised by ordinary members of the Church or by his own priests, other than by those who have special axes to grind. Most refer to him with personal liking, the laity talking of him with a mixture of awe and affection, his priests

with an element of teasing in their respect. Even those liberals who are exasperated with his unyielding traditionalism will often still mutter grudging compliments.

It is no mean feat, in an age where destructive comment is the order of the day, to have inspired and retained respect over nearly a quarter of a century from politicians of all hues, the leaders of other denominations and, indeed, other religions, the monarch and his Church. It boils down to a recognition of true holiness, of a man in touch with God.

● Basil Hume: By His Friends, edited by Carolyn Butler, Fount Paperbacks, £5.99.

TOMORROW

Why Hume is the best loved churchman in Britain, by The Most Reverend Timothy Radcliffe, Master of the Dominican Order



George Carey — relations were said to be strained — and, right, Widdecombe the convert



EARLY in 1977, Cardinal Hume rang to tell me the Holy Ghost had "sure as Hell" come to his rescue during a potentially embarrassing interview by Robin Day. Day had asked him about the vows of celibacy and, said the cardinal: "I felt the blood drain from my body... I had no idea where this would lead. I said a quiet prayer to the Holy Ghost and waited for my inevitable execution."



Andrew Motion chooses his favourite book

MY favourite book as a child was *The Once and Future King*, by T.H. White. It offered very brilliant solutions to very difficult problems, such as how can Merlin know everything? The answer? He lives backwards. My favourite passage is when Merlin transforms the boy Arthur into different animals as part of his training. It is truly poetic. White places the boy's character into these creatures and creates poetic truthfulness. It is immensely liberating for the readers.



NEIL BALFOUR

He is dignified in the face of attack. On one occasion he stood quietly by the altar, keeping the whole cathedral in silence, the Mass suspended, until the police came to remove a group of demonstrating homosexuals. A prolonged demonstration outside the cathedral, which lasted several weeks, of a handful of Catholics supporting the ordination of women, drew a raised eyebrow but no comment.

Those who know him say his attitude to George Carey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, verges on the contemptuous in private, but no trace of this has ever been publicly discernible. Relations between the two denominations appear to have weathered the storm, even if the sharp reduction in the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church of England, following the loss of so many to Rome, has left them less in tune with each other. In fact, the cardinal recognises that basic faith and traditional values are best upheld not only by the remaining Anglo-Catholics, but also by the Evangelicals. He has long been an admirer of Billy Graham, attending his last mission to England for some hours.

There is more than one way for secularism to win and the cardinal fights it well in its more recognisable forms. He

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We need care, not chemicals

Two hundred years ago, a French doctor, Philippe Pinel, removed the chains from his mental patients and began a revolution in the treatment of psychiatric illness. He dealt with them as human beings who might be cured, rather than just society's rejects. He also recognised his warders as co-reformers. At Ashworth Hospital, in the last year of the 20th century, inmates with personality disorders, including paedophiles and sex offenders, were locked in secure accommodation, where they were fed medication and pornography videos. And this is progress?

The Ashworth report is a devastating indictment of one hospital. But it goes wider. When, in the course of the report's account of the failure of care and supervision, the phrase "therapeutic nihilism" cropped up, it told us something about the sad decline of psychiatric treatment in Britain. Once, we led the world in the notion of care rather than containment, the idea that with long-term therapy, even those suffering from psychotic disorders might be rehabilitated.

At Ashworth, security became not just the overriding concern but the guiding principle. The very isolation that society demanded was the root of the problem. With few professional contacts in the wider field of psychiatry, and with prison training rather than developed expertise in mental care, staff began to lose sight of their objectives, to assimilate the values of inmates. They created a strange, anomalous society, a process which the American sociologist, Erving Goffman, in his book *Asylums*, described as a form of inbreeding.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, writing to *The Times* last October, attacked the attitude of those who regarded some offenders as beyond help: "I

think that in more recent years there are many people in the psychiatric profession who have come to the conclusion that people with psychopathic disorders are not treatable." He urged them not to retreat into defensive mode and simply to regard their job as one of protecting the public rather than engaging in the more demanding task of rehabilitating patients. His message was right and commendable. But it comes late in the day.

As someone who has seen more than I have really wanted to of the corridors and secure wards of one psychiatric hospital — the Royal Edinburgh — I know something of the dedication and commitment shown by those who work in this most difficult and under-appreciated area of the medical profession. But I also know about the pressures that have changed it over the years, from a place which was once held up as the model of what a psychiatric hospital ought to be, to the soulless and depressing centre it has become today. Its wards have been upgraded, its walls brightly painted. But it is no longer a place where its inmates are nurtured, supported and helped gradually back into a state where they can once again cope with the unforgiving world outside.

This was a place built for the long-term treatment of its patients. You can still see the huge walled gardens outside where they used to work. As

recently as the 1970s, there was a sense of teamwork involving professors, psychologists, nurses, social workers and patients. The public were part of it too — there would be regular art exhibitions, and social events to which they were invited. Patients joined regularly in group therapy sessions where they would be encouraged to talk of their most deep-seated problems, even where this involved sexual disorders.

Today that ethos has all but gone. No latent paedophile in today's vigilante society would dare to confess his secrets in so exposed an arena. The psychotherapeutic aspect of treatment has, in any event, taken second place. Instead, there is what one psychiatrist describes as the "revolving door" approach. With the growing sophistication of tranquillisers and antidepressants, behaviour can be rapidly controlled, and patients who might have faced weeks of treatment are released, often after only a few days. Whether they are ready to face the outside world is another matter. Care in the community was meant to ensure that there was ample provision for them elsewhere. The reality is far from that.

At the same time, the Royal Edinburgh, like other big hospitals, which are seen as dinosaurs in today's terms, have had to cut costs and reduce staff numbers, which means that nurses do not have the time nor the expertise for therapeutic care. These skills are sometimes neither taught nor propounded. Research grants tend to go towards the development of new drugs rather than to the development of training. The net result is a drop in morale and the feeling that all that is required is to get patients out of the door as quickly as possible.

That is not to denigrate the doctors themselves. Their diagnostic skills are undoubted, as is the progress they can make in finding the correct cocktails of drugs to transform a psychotic patient into someone who can take their place in the outside world. They are, often literally, lifesavers. But the emphasis today is on biochemistry, not psychotherapeutic care.

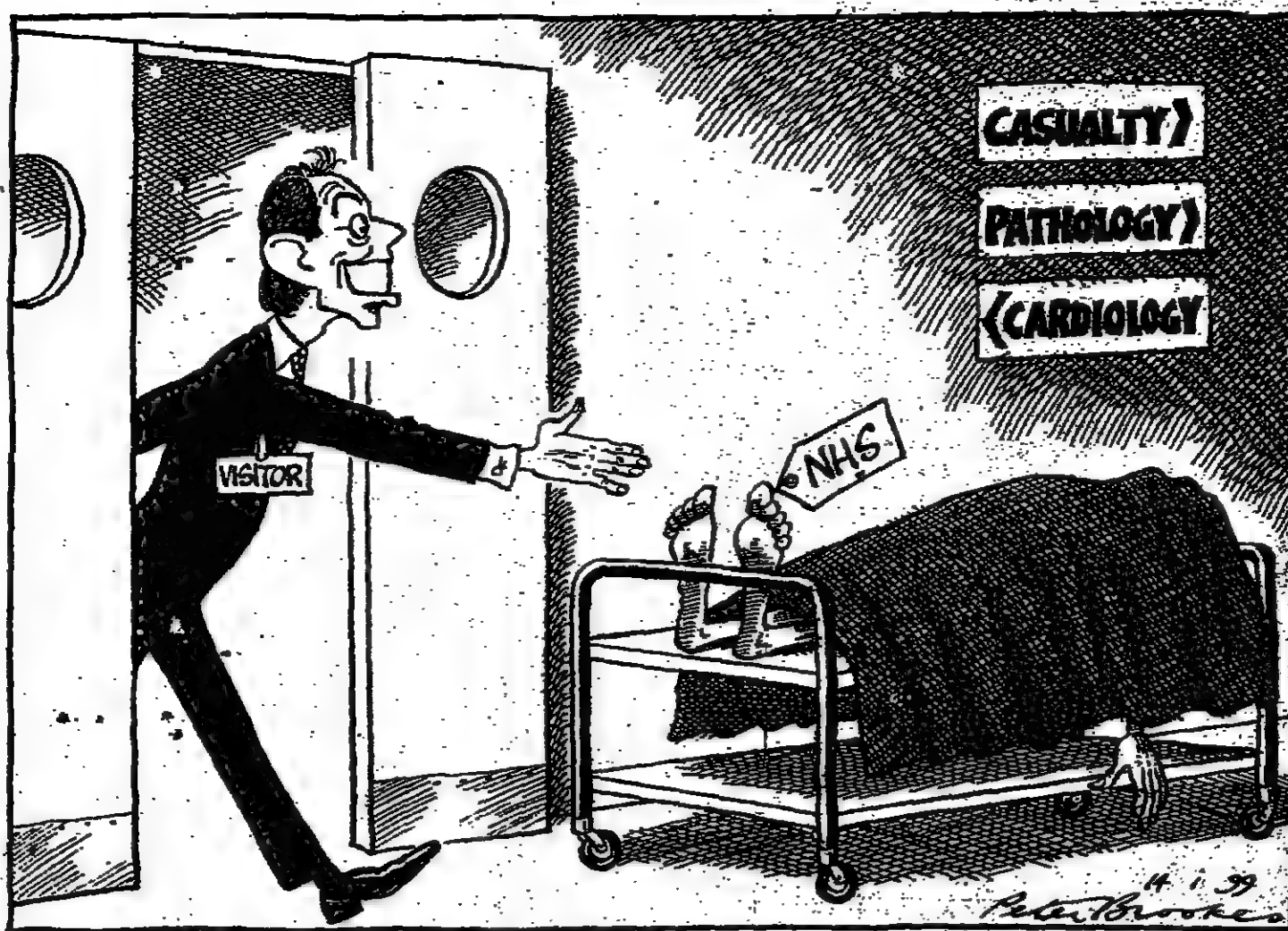
Mental illness, psychosis in particular, is seen as deriving from a chemical imbalance, and that is usually treatable. Where it is not, where a patient is potentially dangerous or a violent offender, secure accommodation is the only alternative. What is too often ignored is how a patient's behaviour may have developed in the first place, whether there may be underlying psychological and social issues which are exacerbating the problem.

All of this has seen the diminution of traditional psychiatry. That took time, it meant delving deep — and, of course, it did not always work. But it gave the patient one thing which, for all the sophisticated medication available, is still desperately needed: the human touch. Winston Churchill once said that a civilised society could be judged by the way it dealt with its prisoners. A stronger case could be made for the way it treats the mentally ill. By that standard, we do not measure up too well.

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Magnus Linklater



"HI! HOW ARE YOU FEELING?"

Get real about Brazil

Market collapse is not necessarily contagious. It could even be a boon

Here we go again. In 1997 it was Asia and Thailand. In 1998 it was Russia and Eastern Europe. Now that it's 1999 it must be time for Latin America and Brazil.

The only thing that was surprising, or even unusual, about yesterday's financial mini-crisis was that it did not happen in the summer holidays. After all, there is now an established form in these matters. Thailand devalued in July two years ago. Russia devalued in August last year. So why didn't Brazil wait until the summer before devaluing its real, sacking its central bank Governor and triggering the latest bout of panic in stock markets from New York to Hong Kong? Maybe because January is the summer in Brazil. Or maybe because Latin Americans have never been noted for their timekeeping. Or maybe because the patterns apparently linking all these emerging market crises are not quite as simple as might be supposed.

Obviously, these events do have some features in common. They all involve poor countries whose people end up suffering grievously, in some cases even dying, as a direct result of the economic disasters. They all involve Western bankers and investors lending recklessly to countries of which they know little, often for no better reason than to keep up with their fashionable rivals on the other side of Wall Street or Cheap-side. They all involve the Western world economic leadership, usually with Robert Rubin, the US Treasury Secretary, and Michel Camdessus, the head of the IMF, at the forefront, declaring publicly that "we have drawn a line in the sand — country X will not be allowed to fall". And, of course, they all involve financial speculators trying to profit from the stricken countries' misfortunes.

But having said all this, there is much less than meets the eye to the popular view that these successive collapses in Asia, Eastern Europe and now Latin America threaten to push the world into a dark age of economic anarchy — a lawless world of unregulated markets, in which barbaric hordes of speculators spread "financial contagion" around the world like some latter-day Black Death. This strange brand of financial militarism is already popular in Asia and France and it will undoubtedly gain additional adherents in Latin America as a result of this week's events. Yet to blame the recurrent crises in emerging markets on speculation and financial contagion is to confuse

the symptoms of the disease with its cause.

What, then, has been the real cause? The real link between all the outbreaks of devaluation and financial crisis has not been "financial contagion", deregulation, reckless lending or even crisis mismanagement by the IMF and the G7. It has been the misguided policy of Governments in the afflicted countries and these policy blunders could in turn be blamed on arrogance, incompetence and outright corruption.

The blunders these Governments all made are all too familiar to generations of Britons from the experience of John Major, Harold Wilson and Stafford Cripps. These blunders can be summarised in three sentences. Allowing a nation's currency to become overvalued is risky. Trying to "defend" a currency once it becomes overvalued is foolish. And staking a nation's entire economic reputation on this long-shot gamble is either recklessly incompetent or, as in the case of Russia and Indonesia, criminally corrupt.

Neither Brazil, nor Russia, nor Thailand — nor, for that matter, Indonesia, Malaysia and Korea — had any need to stake their national fortunes on a particular value of the exchange rate between the dollar and the real, rouble or baht. These Governments insisted, of course, that their strong currencies were symbols of national economic rehabilitation — that if these nations fell their currencies would rapidly slide back to hyperinflation (in the case of Brazil), communism (Russia) or poverty (Thailand).

But by the very fact of making such wild assertions, the politicians who made them discredited the fundamental soundness of their own economic policies and guaranteed an exaggerated panic once their currencies collapsed. Instead of defending overvalued currencies to curb inflation, the Brazilian and Russian Governments could have

worked harder to collect taxes and to limit wasteful public spending. But that, of course, would have conflicted with the interests of their ruling elites. The Governments of Thailand, Korea and Indonesia could have curbed the wildly imprudent foreign borrowing of their domestic banks and industrial companies. But that would have run into opposition from those countries' big businessmen and bankers — a not insubstantial problem when, as in Indonesia, the country's biggest businessman and banker was the President himself.

To see, that this analysis is broadly right it is sufficient to note that countries which have avoided the temptation of fixing their exchange rates, while following tough anti-inflationary policies and carefully controlling the wider excesses in their financial markets, have generally avoided too much damage in the general carnage of the past 18 months.

It is simply not true, as is still widely claimed, that all emerging markets have been subjected to random and irrational attack. After the Russian collapse, for example, many commentators assumed that the crisis would spread quickly to Central Europe, since many financial dealers could not tell the difference between Poland, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. However, the cynics (myself included) were proved wrong. After a few days of blind panic, the financial markets did start to discriminate. They recognised that Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, while each had their problems, were not remotely in danger of a Russian-style default.

In Asia, too, many of the countries with solid finances and reasonably valued markets — for example, Taiwan, Singapore and India — have passed through the crisis relatively unharmed. And in Hong Kong, where the damage was serious, a soundly managed currency

was successfully defended by accepting a downward adjustment in property and stock market prices that was economically justifiable and long overdue. It will be interesting to see now whether the whole of Latin America succumbs to the contagion, as was being widely predicted yesterday. Or whether, as I suspect, the markets will again discriminate between those countries that are closely linked to Brazil and whose policies are unsustainable and those, such as Mexico, Chile and Argentina, which have sufficiently sound economies to weather the storm.

To be sure, even the best performing emerging economies have suffered serious losses from the collapse of trade with their neighbors. And all will continue to pay a high price for these crises for years, in the sense that Western bankers and investors have become more cautious about where they put their money and they will demand much higher potential returns. But the rediscovery of financial prudence by Western bankers and the rise in the cost of capital in emerging countries is surely a boon, not a curse. After all, everyone agrees that one of the main causes of all these crises has been indiscriminate lending by cheap and careless Western bankers for projects that should never have gone ahead because they could never yield a profit. One need only recall the twin towers in Kuala Lumpur, constructed largely so that Malaysia could boast of having the tallest buildings in the world.

In sum, I do not endorse the cataclysmic instant analysis of the Brazilian crisis implied by yesterday morning's action in world financial markets. Of course, Brazil's neighbours will suffer some shock waves and even the United States will be hit by a modest loss of exports. But the continuing strength of domestic demand and investment in the United States and Europe are far more important to the world economy, and even to Latin America, than anything happening in Brazil. As long as Americans and Europeans keep spending, the world will avoid recession and even the financial markets will probably get over this latest panic attack. As for Brazil, with a combination of the right policies and a bit of luck, devaluation could be turned to its advantage, as we found in Britain in 1992.

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Anatole Kaletsky



Home strife

FOR the first time in months a Cabinet minister is to win public sympathy: he is being threatened with a writ by his builder. Alan Michael, the Welsh Secretary, is in dispute with a tiler at his home. Alan Brain says the prospective leader of the Welsh National Assembly has not paid him: hired to do £10,000 of renovations, he was marooned off the Cardiff property after Mrs Michael professed herself unsatisfied. "I felt I was being bullied," says Mary Michael. "I have sent part of his claim in full and final settlement."

ANY Cabinet minister who has not been subjected to the Peter Mandelson charm offensive, please come forward. Tuesday night found our hero at Grand Paradiso, Pimlico, where he shared a long and intimate dinner with his fellow home-owners, Chris Smith.

Sex aide

SAFE sex. Ginger style. Geri Halliwell, the old Spice-turned-UN ambassador (a post disclosed here) is filming two videos on "safer sex" for teenagers. "Geri believes very strongly that women have the right to reproductive health, and to look after themselves," says her chemist. "She is also a firm believer that



women should use the facilities we have in the West". Will Ann Widdecombe (right) approve?

ALAN BENNETT on attending a party with Noël Coward, where Dudley Moore was hammering a piano: "What a clever young man," said Coward. "He can play on the black notes as well as the white."

Dark knight

SEAN CONNERY'S exclusion from the honours list seems to have made him a trifle chippy. Connery recently played a "Sir August de Wynter", who gained his title through despicable scheming. "De Wynter is a scoundrel, a blackmailer and a cheat," says Connery. "It makes you wonder what exactly are the criteria to qualify? Loyalty to the Union, perhaps."

ARCHIE NORMAN, the penny-pinching Tory chief executive, has puzzled employees by asking them to stop using e-mail. At a cost of £1p a message, I hear Scrooge told his workforce that this would save the broke party dash verbally, so as not to waste money.

Fitness fanatic

AMID rumours of fragile health, General Pinochet has converted his drawing room into a gym. Still



waiting for the law lords to sort that brief out, and thought by some to be showing the early signs of Alzheimer's disease, Pinochet has started the physical jerks at his retreat in Wentworth, Surrey.

According to producers of *The Real Pinochet*, a profile of the old tyrant: "He's a fitness fanatic. The iron discipline he applied to his country, he applies to himself. He was doing dozens of sit-ups."

HAS John Major usurped the late Harold Wilson as the Queen's favourite PM? After making him a Companion of Honour, the Queen invited John and Norma to a sleep-over at Sandringham on Tuesday. It was a strange crew: Amartya Sen, grouchy left-wing Master of Trinity College, Sir Michael Oswald, the director of Royal Stads, and the odd RAF buff. The Majors were lucky to stay the night — an honour I cannot remember being extended to Baroness Thatcher after her fall.

JASPER GERARD

'I want to see the first human clone born in the Dome as midnight strikes for the new millennium'

By James Wright

THE Millennium Dome is the arena where Cool Britannia stands trial. Will the Dome be an advertising opportunity for new Labour, or a celebration of a Britain beyond Tony Blair's charmed circle?

It is very easy to be critical of new ideas such as the Dome: it takes guts and courage to be positive about them. That is why I got involved with the Millennium Youth Council, which has been advising on the project. I was genuinely excited about its potential, but the project has become too politicised.

The Dome has become a partisan stunt to prove how well new Labour is doing. The replacement of Peter Mandelson with the Prime Minister's old friend Lord Falconer of Thoroton has only emphasised the suffocating

ly Blairite nature of the enterprise. The New Millennium Enterprise Company (NMEC), which is responsible for building and operating the Dome and co-ordinating a national programme of events, is a company in name only. Its literature even says "our work will help the Government meet its agenda and targets".

The Learning Experience, with which the youth council is most closely linked, will have as its focus the Tesco SchoolNet 2000 project. The public is invited to "build a huge treasure-chest of their own ideas and discoveries about life in the UK" on the Internet. But the godparent for the project is Floella Benjamin, the 1980s TV personality. The council has not met her and most are too young to have heard of

her. The zone runs the risk of being merely a patronising, primary-school assembly.

The Mind Zone which will "celebrate the unique creativity of the human brain by exploring the nature of our senses and perceptions" is being sponsored by GEC and British Aerospace. Experiences announced so far will attempt to examine the way the brain operates, the human fascination with artificial intelligence and to challenge common perceptions of time and space. The intentions are good, but the results are already disappointing.

Both sponsors are involved in arms technology and I feel uneasy about this. I don't object to where the money comes from, but I do object to it being hidden. No arms technology will be on display, but it should be. While it is not politically correct, or in line with new Labour thinking, advanced arms technology is exciting and, if celebrated appropriately, would, I am sure, attract a large number of visitors.

The lack of imagination permeates every area. The Body Zone will not look at the possibility of what genetic engineering, cybernetics or cryogenics offers us. Instead exhibits will follow food round the digestion system and explore what a hangover is like. It will not even explore sex, AIDS or cancer. We should be looking at all three and the potential medical and recreational benefits

of cannabis, Ecstasy and cocaine. I would also like to see the first human clone born in the Dome at midnight, December 31, 1999.

The nearest one will get to "exploring our senses and perceptions" is to be dazzled by lights and deafened by music. You can get that any Saturday night in the Ministry of Sound. I expect far more from the Minister without Portfolio.

I would like to see substantive experiences and exhibits that tackle controversial issues. It should be a forum for public debate not for new Labour to tell us how fantastic it is. British achievements should be celebrated. The arms trade and fast-food giants deserve a proper mention, especially as they are looting the Bill. McDonald's golden arches

of Western capitalism should form the gates of the People's Millennium Dome.

Having had 18 months to test the water, NMEC should know what people do not want. Some people will paddle, visiting every zone, trying to take it all in. Some will swim, spending time in a few zones investigating what is on offer. Others will dive in, immersing themselves in one zone, discovering all there is to know there. All that could be achieved if the right things were planned for the Dome. But the risk is a sea of nothing in which we could all drown, swamped by political correctness and leaving us with more questions than when we arrived. The risk is an "uncool Britannia".

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AN END TO ENTITLEMENT

The Government edges towards radical welfare reform

The first Prime Minister's Question Time of 1999 signalled another period of intense conflict between the major parties. Neither the exchanges on the current condition of the NHS nor the circumstances surrounding Peter Mandelson's resignation shed much light on the future direction of this administration. A more prophetic signal may have emerged before Tony Blair rose to his feet. It came in the subdued form of a departmental press release.

For the past 20 months, according to ministers, the Government has slowly but surely laid the foundations for fundamental reform of the welfare state. This process has been so protracted that, at times, it seemed unlikely that even a single-storey construction would ever be built on the site.

Mr Blair and his colleagues have not been inactive. But most of their measures have either been Green Papers which clarified key questions rather than offered bold answers, or incremental moves that extended the legislation undertaken by Peter Lilley. The most dramatic innovation — the "New Deal" — which is clearly ambitious and expensive, concentrates on the young unemployed rather than the core constituencies of the social security system.

The announcement by David Blunkett and Alistair Darling yesterday indicates that, having paddled at the edges of the Rubicon, the Government may be ready to cross it. The £80 million pilot programme will make state benefits for all claimants, including the disabled and single parents, dependent on timely attendance at an interview at which their eligibility for and efforts to acquire employment would be the centre of discussion. Failure to accept a reasonable offer of work would, for all but the disabled and single parents, invite the real prospect of benefit being withdrawn.

Although this particular project is based on only 12 centres covering 450,000 people over a three-year period, the forthcoming

Welfare Reform Bill would allow the Government to create a comprehensive version of this scheme in little more than a year. If American experience is reproduced even modestly in this country then these experiments are likely to lead quite swiftly to a switch in policy at the national level.

The Government has shifted emphasis towards compulsion after attempting to achieve similar results by the voluntary route. That option, closely associated with Harriet Harman, the former Social Security Secretary, has, as widely predicted, proved a disappointment in practice. There may have been virtues, at least within the Labour Party, in moving towards a tougher stance in stages. Mr Darling has rightly recognised that this is the moment for a change of approach.

The Government's commitment to work as the best possible form of welfare is admirable. If it is to be fulfilled then rules must match the rhetoric. A large number of exemptions that dilute the link between availability for interview and receipt of benefit, or between job offers and loss of benefit, would undermine the integrity of the enterprise. There is also no compelling reason why lone parents whose children have reached school age should not be expected to enter further education, training or part-time employment. This would, though, require more flexibility about the rate at which benefit is removed from those willing to undertake such positions.

The Government must be wise to seize its opportunity to be more radical still while, as the unexpected fall in unemployment yesterday demonstrated, the state of the economy cannot be used as an alibi for inaction. If ministers expand the strategy they have outlined then welfare reform, in this sphere at least, may match or even exceed the advance publicity. This will in turn to a large degree determine the legacy of the Prime Minister and new Labour.

OUTRAGE IN COURT

Prosecutors move the goalposts to keep the Anwar case alive

For 11 weeks, Malaysian prosecutors have called witness after witness in their attempt to prove sensational allegations of "sexual misconduct and sodomy" by Anwar Ibrahim. Malaysia's sacked former Deputy Prime Minister. Every sordid detail, including DNA tests on a semen-stained mattress displayed, for added drama, in court, has been prominently reported in the country's normally staid press. In proceedings ostensibly concerned to establish whether the prosecution can establish its case against Mr Anwar for the "corrupt practice" of attempting to suppress criminal proceedings against him, this focus on alleged sexual acts has always looked more like an effort to destroy him politically by ruining his reputation as a devout Muslim than a proper concern to see justice done.

Now the prosecution has turned the questionable into the disgraceful. Yesterday, just as it was closing its case on the 45th day of these hearings, it successfully applied to move the goalposts by amending the four corruption charges. Mr Anwar is no longer accused of "directing" police to obtain statements from key prosecution witnesses to "deny sexual misconduct and sodomy committed by him". The witnesses are now said to have made such "allegations", but Mr Anwar is no longer asserted to have committed any such acts.

After the stinging of so much defamatory mud, this may appear as a moral victory, but the effect is to rescue the prosecution's case from collapse, and to put Mr Anwar at greater risk of conviction. This is because the amendments lower the burden of proof. Even if all the allegations of illegal sexual conduct — homosexual intercourse is outlawed in Malaysia — are, as is almost certain, found to be fabricated lies, he could still be convicted of trying to get them retracted and sentenced to 14 years in jail.

Under Malaysian law, prosecutors have

the right to alter charges at any time before the judge's ruling. But it is appalling that Judge Augustine Paul allowed the prosecution's 11th-hour retreat on the ground that "the commission of sexual misconduct and sodomy... is not really a substantive element to be proved". So substantive did the judge find this "element" earlier, that when Mr Anwar's former driver contradicted his earlier court testimony that he had been sodomised, Judge Paul refused to have that testimony ruled out of court.

As Mr Anwar put it yesterday, with understandable bitterness: "What they cannot prove... they change." And indeed, proof has eluded the prosecution. All but one of the key witnesses have withdrawn their allegations, saying that they were tortured or suborned into making them. The head of the Special Branch, called by the prosecution, produced a report he had written to the Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in 1997, stating that the sexual allegations were groundless and "deliberately created" as part of a conspiracy. That was a year before Dr Mahathir sacked Mr Anwar as "morally unfit" to govern. And last week, the government chemist conceded that the mattress stains on which he had conducted DNA tests could have been planted by police, and that the tests could not warrant a conviction.

In this "corruption" case, there has never been any suggestion that Mr Anwar, a man reputed for integrity, has abused power for personal gain. At worst, he now stands accused of attempting to fend off a conspiracy to blacken his name and land him in prison. Even if Judge Paul — there is no jury — unexpectedly throws this case out today, the State has more charges in the pipeline. Mr Anwar's ordeal could thus endure until June at the earliest. The defence has yet to be heard. But already, Malaysian justice is in the dock.

FOSTERING COMPROMISE

The Bramleys' plea to adopt merits a fresh examination

"We are two good, honest, caring people who are willing to give up our home, family and friends and jobs to maintain Jade and Hannah's happiness." Jennifer and Jeffrey Bramley's plea to be allowed to keep the two girls they have fostered since March will provoke sympathy among many parents. On being told that they could not adopt the children, but must hand them back to Cambridgeshire social services, the Bramleys vanished, taking the girls with them. Although some may wonder whether responsible parents would subject their children to a nomadic life, this unusual, tragic case merits re-examination. If the local authority were prepared to do so, the Bramleys would be more likely to break their cover, and end the children's life on the road.

Both the Bramleys and Cambridgeshire social services claim that they are putting the interests of the children first. The authority argues that it decided to order the return of Jade and Hannah only after considerable deliberations. This case is exceptional: it is the first time in ten years that it has terminated such a placement. In hiding, the Bramleys claim the authority's decision was based on the view of "one social worker". The couple were criticised for, in their words, saying "no" and "don't"

too often to the girls. When the Bramleys tried to reverse the authority's decision in court, the judge was "prevented from reading evidence" of the girls' happiness.

Many parents might conclude that, if the Bramleys are to be believed, the council is wrong to forbid two apparently loving adults from adopting children on the politically correct grounds of being too strict. Jade and Hannah's mother admits that, as her children are "a bit lively and get up to all sorts", "you do need to give them some discipline if they're naughty".

If Cambridgeshire social services have grounds for concern about the Bramleys' skills, these have yet to emerge. Mr Bramley's failure to admit that he had been in care when young was foolish, but this should not disqualify him from adopting a child. The Bramleys may well have been wrong to assume that they would be able to adopt their foster children. Fostering should not be seen as a backdoor to adoption. It was rash to delude Jade and Hannah that the Bramleys were to be their "forever Mum and Dad" before the adoption order was made. But, in light of the Bramleys' plea, the case that they have made and the devotion they appear to have for the two girls, the authority should now offer to reopen the case.

Fairness of Senate impeachment trial

From Professor Antony Allott

Sir, The commencement of the "trial" of President Clinton, if it goes ahead, will irretrievably destroy the claim of the United States to be a country of constitutional government under the rule of law. The proceedings subvert the overriding basic protections for every individual assured by the Constitution.

Under the rubric of "due process", everyone is entitled to a fair trial by an impartial tribunal: no one shall be compelled to incriminate him or herself by entrapment or otherwise. Everyone is entitled to these safeguards, even a President; no one is to be denied the equal protection of the laws.

The senators who will act as a so-called jury have through their public pronouncements already prejudged the case and revealed their prejudices. The vast publicity over the past months given to every detail, relevant or irrelevant, which incriminates the President renders the selection of an open-minded jury impossible.

In every other proceeding, if the position were similar, the case would be thrown out *in limine*, whatever the gravity of the charges, because of the impossibility of selecting an impartial jury, and never come to trial. Counsel for the President should take a preliminary objection to the fairness of the proceedings, irrespective of the merits of the charges.

It would go to restoring the credibility of the American judicial system if the presiding Chief Justice were to accede to this challenge.

Yours faithfully,
ANTHONY ALLOTT,
Sorbok Mill, Bodicote,
Oxfordshire OX15 4AU.
January 11.

From Margaret Countess Attlee

Sir, Although we are understandably bemused, we mustn't be too hard on the US Congress.

Three hundred and fifty years ago, on January 20, 1649, the trial of Charles I commenced — instigated by republicans. The King refused to recognise the court and a plea of guilty was entered on his behalf.

The question of witnesses arose. The republicans wanted evidence to be heard, to justify their having taken their King to trial. In the event, unable to call witnesses because of the plea of guilty, they appointed a committee, to sit in private, separate from the trial, to hear testimonies against the King. These depositions were then read out in public.

Had there been a 17th-century World Wide Web, no doubt the republicans would have published the evidence on the Internet.

Yours faithfully,
MARGARET ATTLEE,
42 Wildcroft Manor,
Putney Heath, SW15 3TT.
January 9.

From Professor David Lowenthal

Sir, Comparisons of Clinton's impeachment trial with Andrew Johnson's are premature, but *The Times* does scant justice to the earlier defendant.

Johnson was no more "accidental" a President than Harry Truman, and for Tim Hames to term him "low-born and uncouth" (report, "Johnson was not fit for the doghouse", January 8) defames an able and talented patriot, impeached on largely trivial charges for blatantly partisan reasons. Indeed, six years after leaving the White House Johnson was re-elected to the US Senate, with non-partisan support.

The instrument of Johnson's survival from impeachment, Senator Edmund Ross of Kansas, did not destroy his own political career (leading article, January 9) but only deflected it. Switching to the Democratic Party, Ross was made Governor of New Mexico and later head of the Immigration Bureau by President Grover Cleveland in the 1880s and 1890s.

American party politics were once more flexibly lenient than they have since become.

Yours faithfully,
DAVID LOWENTHAL,
56 Crown Street,
Harrow on the Hill HA2 0HR.
January 9.

Smoot of Ute

From Mr Peter Golds

Sir, Your "salient story" on Senator Reed Smoot (leading article, December 28) has an additional resonance for the millennium as the US Senate considers the activities of President Clinton.

In 1902 the Senate sat for some time debating whether to admit the Mormon Smoot who had been appointed to it by the Utah Legislature on that state's admission to the Union.

Eventually a Senate stalwart observed his colleagues and pointed out that the body included numerous "monogamists who did not mono" and could therefore admit "a polygamist who did not poly".

Perhaps the current Senate should remember this.

Yours faithfully,
PETER GOLDS,
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January 4.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Commission accused on Europe's missing millions

From Mr Geoffrey Martin

Sir, Your leading article, "In Europe's name" (January 13), strings together a number of facts — some established, some unproven — to launch an attack on the European Commission. It quotes the figure of £3 billion estimated by the European Court of Auditors as not properly accounted for. But according to the court, more than 90 per cent of the irregularities are due to national authorities, not the Commission.

National governments have to take responsibility for any irregularities in areas of EU action under their control. Out of 950 cases recently investigated by the anti-fraud unit (Uclaf), 925 related to spending in EU countries.

Much of the problem is not due to fraud but accounting errors, some of which are later remedied. In addition, the amounts involved have been on a clear downward path for some years. To point out that the share of EU spending for which the court cannot account is similar to the level of actual fraud estimated by the Benefits Agency for the UK social security system is not to minimise the problem, but to put it in perspective.

Less than 20 per cent of the EU budget is managed directly by the European Commission. Of course, this still adds up to a significant amount of public expenditure, and EU citizens have every right to expect it to be properly managed. But the implication that the Commission connives in fraud is wholly wrong.

Cases of fraud have been uncovered by the Commission's anti-fraud unit, not by the European Parliament. Legal immunity has been withdrawn from officials to allow judicial proceedings to take place in the most serious cases, and disciplinary action taken in others.

Dismissing the nine ongoing and new Commission reforms announced by President Santer this week as "a few German-made bones of accountability" is to divert attention from the question that ought to be asked: how current deficiencies can be tackled.

Yours faithfully,
GEOFFREY MARTIN
(Head of the Representation
in the UK),
The European Commission,
8 Storey's Gate, SW1P 3AT.
January 13.

From Sir Alan Smith

Sir, Members of the European Parliament are not renowned for their frugality when spending the taxpayers' money. When there is a demand that all 20 of the European Commissioners, including Jacques Santer, be sacked for fraud, inefficiency and mismanagement, then perhaps we should listen.

Whilst very little financial information is made available to the British public it would appear that the commissioners spend, on our account, the equivalent of £65 billion per annum. The opportunities for extravagance and downright dishonesty must be immense.

One must ask why Labour, Liberal Democrats and a small minority of Conservative politicians, plus leaders of some of our larger companies, are so keen to bulldoze us into the euro and full integration with the European Union. Could it be because they, too, would like to get on the gravy train and enjoy all the perks which seem to abound in Brussels?

When are all these people going to realise that they can squander our taxes with high living and the perks of

office only for so long? Eventually, and hopefully before too long, they will be thrown out of office.

Yours truly,
ALAN SMITH
(President,
Dawson International plc),
Ardgarny House, Cleish,
By Kinross, Kinross-shire KY13 7LG.
January 13.

From Mr Colin Bullen

Sir, The current dispute between the European Commission and the European Parliament serves to illustrate the true nature of both, and emphasises how different is the culture of the EU from that of the UK.

The Commission is shown to be at best incompetent, or at worst corrupt, but certainly imbued with enormous arrogance, while the Parliament is revealed as ineffective, the only weapon at its disposal being one it dare not use.

The naive hope expressed by some MEPs that they will be able to shame Commission members into resignation shows ignorance of the disposition of these bureaucratic elites, while Jacques Santer's promised investigation will have as much effect as one of Sir Humphrey Appleby's famous leak inquiries.

The British people should take warning from these events and turn back from further involvement in this putative federal superstate or else risk losing all democratic control over those who seek to be their masters.

Yours faithfully,
COLIN BULLEN
(NEC member, Campaign for an
Independent Britain),
119 Douglas Road,
Tonbridge, Kent TN9 2UE.
January 13.

Millennium 'sort-out'

From Mrs Anne Hichens

Sir, Over a thousand years ago the people of this parish, Langford, were building a new, bigger church, using the stones and carvings from two older ones.

By 1067 it was there and has been loved and used continually for the intervening years. We have just strengthened the tower and are about to sort out a bit of roof. That is our local millennium heritage and our vicar looks after 12 similar gems.

Mr P. K. Collymore (letter, December 31) objects to emotive language about the Dome while using it himself. "Whinge" is not the word for what I feel. I am very angry at the waste of a huge amount of (effectively) our money on what appears to be a self-congratulatory seaside funfair in a tent which it is hoped will last a few years.

I can think of many causes more worthy than this: we could actually solve homelessness, for instance, or the dearth of trained psychiatrists for the mentally ill and prisoners.

At least in a thousand years, if mankind survives, someone might say we had had a good try at sorting ourselves out at this time.

Yours,
ANNE HICHENS,
Radcot Bridge Farm,
Brampton,
Oxfordshire OX18 2XS.
January 2.

Church nudity

From Mr Robert Key, MP
for Salisbury (Conservative)

Sir, The Dean and Chapter of Salisbury are right to welcome challenging sculptures to our cathedral (photograph and report, "Naked men in the cloisters disturb cathedral calm", January 9; *Credo*, Weekend, same day). They hope they will be spiritually creative.

Neither male nudity nor such clerical aspirations are new to Salisbury's Christians. Attendance at May's Salisbury Festival sculpture exhibition will not be compulsory: but from 1475 the congregation in St Thomas's Church at the other end of our High Street were forced to contemplate the huge donkey pointing over the chancel arch featuring nudes in Heaven and Hell — including a male nude in his bishop's miter climbing out of his coffin.

Reformation fanatics whitewashed it, but Salisbury's Victorians were not prudish and restored it.

Yours faithfully,
ROBERT KEY,
House of Commons.
January 9.

Art and nature

From Mr B. S. Baggaley

Sir, I was surprised to see that Charles Saatchi has called his exhibition *Neurotic Realism Part 1*. Earlier versions of Tomoko Takahashi's type of work (review and photograph, Arts, January 12) have existed for many years, on two levels, in my house — in the garage and in my daughters' bedroom.

Yours faithfully,
BRIAN BAGGALEY,
Westwood,
201 Stallingford Road,
Blythe Bridge, Stoke-on-Trent,
Staffordshire ST11 9PB.
January 12.

'Backdoor' euthanasia

From Lord Ashbourne

Sir, Your reports of January 6 show the anguish that can be caused to families when patients' lives are shortened by the withholding of food and fluids (see also letters, January 9). A change of official policy may be needed to prevent many more such tragic cases.

The House of Lords judgment in the well-known case of Tony Bland (1993) defined food and water as "medical treatment" if given through a tube, which allowed them to be withdrawn.

The Department of Health solicitor, when giving evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Medical Ethics in 1993, was reported in the *British Medical Journal* of May 1, 1993, as saying that this judgment "greatly clarified the position and laid down legal principles which point a way forward for the public and the medical profession". He declared that it was "now open to the courts to leave it there and let doctors get on with the business of applying it".

Patients in so-called PVS (persistent vegetative state) are not the only ones affected. The BMA's 1998 consultation

From car to bus

From the Director-General of
the Confederation of Passenger
Transport UK

Sir, Dr Richard Knowles of Salford University makes many salient points about the challenge of getting habitual car drivers on to public transport (report, "Bus lanes alone will not shift Mondeo man", January 7). However, I would like to respond to his criticism of Quality Partnerships — local agreements between bus operators and local authorities to make bus travel more attractive.

There are over 25 of these schemes across the country and clearly they range in size and effectiveness. Certainly bus lanes alone will not bring about the desired shift from car to bus. Bus lanes must be properly

paper, withdrawing and withholding treatment, asked for opinions on withholding water from victims of a stroke.

If patients are to feel safe in hospital, we should restore to our common law the principle that those who have another person in their care may never exercise that care in a manner intended to bring about that person's death.

Yours faithfully,
ASHBOURNE,
House of Lords.
January 7.

From the Reverend
Anthony G. J. Irwin

Sir, Can anyone honestly be surprised by your report today, "Police check hospitals over 'backdoor euthanasia'", when society has been condoning an erosion in the value of human life for a number of years?

People should wake up and realise that acts of abortion and euthanasia involve killing the most defenceless members of our society.

Yours faithfully,
A. G. IRWIN,
22 Glebe Road, Churchstow,
Kingsbridge, Devon TQ7 3RD.
January 6.

enforced and drivers who abuse bus lanes must be subject to strict penalties. Also, local authorities must be brave and provide bus-priority measures where they will benefit passengers most, which is not necessarily where they will cause the least upset to car drivers.

It is true that there is little data available on exactly what percentage of car drivers are now using the bus in Quality Partnership areas, but the point is that, if the schemes are allowed to flourish, some will. It will take some time, but surely Dr Knowles did not expect an instant solution to such a difficult problem?

Yours faithfully,
VERONICA PALMER,
Director-General, Confederation of
Passenger Transport UK,
Imperial House,
15-19 Kingsway, WC2B 6UN.

'Soft' and 'hard' drugs

From the UK Anti-Drugs
Co-ordinator

Sir, I am not alone in maintaining that any attempt to draw a distinction between so-called "hard" and "soft" drugs is unrealistic (letters, January 6) and even dangerous in seeking to wish away the proven harm that drugs like amphetamines and cannabis can do to their users. I have not experienced any disagreement with any minister on this.

All drugs are harmful, in some way, and enforcement against all illegal substances continues. Guidance and information produced by Government and its agencies for parents, professionals and young people themselves set out clearly the risks and consequences of taking illegal drugs, not defining any as "soft" or "hard". The DfEE's recent guidelines for schools, which I endorsed, are no different.

I have acknowledged that some drugs cause particular damage to individuals and the community, and that we should address their availability and misuse as a particular priority. This does not mean that we have given up on the others. All our objectives must be to reduce young people's drug misuse, to reduce drug-related crime, to increase part-

cipation in effective treatment programmes and to reduce the availability of drugs.

All these initiatives are embodied in the new ten-year strategy, *Tackling Drugs to Build a Better Britain*. To achieve them government departments and agencies — both statutory and voluntary — are increasingly working closely together at local, national and international level. Drug action teams across the country have recently submitted to me their action plans for the coming year; and over £200 million extra has been allocated over the next three years for anti-drugs activity.

This will fund programmes to reduce drug-related crime and to get those with the most serious drug problems into treatment and rehabilitation, as well as supporting the development of more sustained and better prevention and education programmes in schools and community settings. I shall report progress and set out an annual plan of action for the United Kingdom in the spring.

Sincerely,
KEITH HELLAWELL,
UK Anti-Drugs Co-ordinator,
Cabinet Office, Room 60A/2,
Horse Guards Road, SW1P 3AL.

Letters may be faxed to 0171-782 5046
e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

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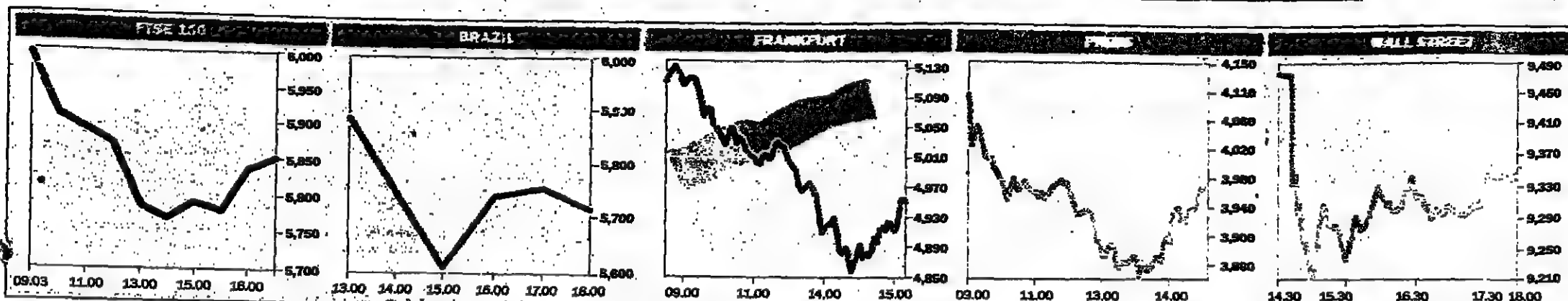
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BUSINESS EDITOR Patience Wheatcroft

THURSDAY JANUARY 14 1999

Investors take cover as Latin American crisis deepens



Shares dive as Brazil devalues

By ALASDAIR MURRAY AND OLIVER AUGUST

INTERNATIONAL financial markets suffered heavy losses yesterday after Brazil's decision to devalue its currency revived fears of a Latin American financial crisis.

Shares in London and other European markets fell sharply while the dollar took a battering on the foreign exchanges. But shares on Wall Street confounded expectations of heavy losses with early falls restricted by some heavy retail buying.

The US is regarded as especially vulnerable to a Brazilian crisis because it supplies about 20 per cent of its total exports to the world's eighth-largest economy.

The market turmoil was triggered by the unexpected resignation of Gustavo Franco, President of the Brazilian Central Bank, and the man regarded as the architect of Brazil's single-currency policy. His resignation was immediately followed by the announcement that Brazil was lowering its exchange-rate band.

Brazil's decision to ditch the central point of its anti-inflation strategy raised fears that capital flight could spread to other American countries, sparking a re-run of the financial crisis which engulfed a year ago.

Despite denials by Francisco

Lopes, the newly appointed Central bank head, traders said the widening of the currency bands to between 1.20 and 1.32 real to the dollar amounted to a *de facto* devaluation. The real immediately dipped to the outer limits of this new band before the Central Bank intervened to prop the currency up at about 1.31 to the dollar.

Traders predicted, however, that with speculative pressure mounting Brazil may devalue again today and said that further moves could leave the Hong Kong dollar vulnerable to renewed speculation.

Trading in the Brazilian stock market was suspended after shares fell 10 per cent within moments of opening. However, stocks later recovered to stand about 3 per cent amid persistent rumours of government intervention.

In London, the FTSE 100 index closed down 83.35 points at 5850.1 — the fourth-largest points fall ever. At one stage, the market was some 287 points lower before a slightly better than expected performance on Wall Street helped to spur a partial recovery.

In New York the Dow Jones industrial average fell 250 points in the first hour of trading but recovered to a loss of between 50 points and 100 points

in afternoon trading, clearing the 9,400 barrier again.

The unexpectedly robust performance was attributed to the continued eagerness of US retail investors to plough money into the stock market.

The dollar, however, fell sharply in the currency markets with investors opting for the pound and the euro as perceived "safe havens". The dollar closed down over two cents against the pound at \$1.6522 while falling from \$1.1575 to \$1.1700 against the euro.

Other European stock markets also clocked up huge losses with Frankfurt 41 per cent down and Paris ending 3.5 per cent lower. Spanish shares, which are regarded as having the greatest exposure to Brazil, fell 7 per cent, with banking stocks losing up to 14 per cent.

The Brazilian Government and Senator Franco have repeatedly denied their intention to devalue. However, Senator Franco said in his resignation speech that he now accepted the need for a more flexible currency and the need to reduce the country's crippling high interest rates of 36 per cent.

The latest crisis was triggered by the decision last week of Minas Gerais, Brazil's second-largest state, to order a 90-day moratorium on debt payments.



Brazilian dealers wait nervously during a delay in trading and listen to a speech by the new central bank president

BUSINESS TODAY

STOCK MARKET	
FTSE 100	5850.1 (-183.5)
Yield	2.80%
FTSE All Share	2665.61 (-77.52)
Nikkei	13403.60 (+42.63)
New York	9297.81 (-176.67)
Dow Jones	1225.29 (-14.22)
S&P Composite	1225.29 (-14.22)
BOND RATE	
Federal Funds	4.75% (4.75%)
Long bond	101.1% (100.0%)
Yield	5.18% (5.22%)
LONDON MONEY	
3-month interest	5.9% (5.7%)
Life long gilt	118.51 (118.73)
STERLING	
New York	1.6495* (1.6327)
London	1.6296 (1.6205)
Frankfurt	1.4121 (1.4126)
Paris	2.2404 (2.2679)
Yen	187.83 (182.29)
£ index	99.0 (98.6)
DOLLAR	
London	1.1707* (1.1576)
Frankfurt	1.3585 (1.3563)
Paris	113.40* (112.40)
Yen	104.0 (103.8)
Tokyo close Yen	111.57
NORTH SEA OIL	
Brent 15-day (Mar)	\$11.05 (\$11.35)
GOLD	
London close	\$285.48 (\$289.75)
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* denotes midday trading prices	

Investors back BTR merger

By PAUL DURMAN

SHAREHOLDERS in BTR and Siebe overwhelmingly approved the engineering group's £8.5 billion merger yesterday.

While Siebe's meeting went smoothly, with more than 99 per cent of shares cast in favour of the all-share deal, BTR's meeting dragged on for four and a half hours after confusion about a proposed adjustment.

Better deal, page 29

Unemployment falls to lowest level in 18 years

By ALASDAIR MURRAY, ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

UNEMPLOYMENT fell in December to reach its lowest level in 18 years, lifting hopes that Britain will avoid a major recession.

The figures, however, took the City by surprise and left economists warning that the Bank of England may reconsider its rate-cutting strategy.

The Bank had indicated after the rate cut earlier this month that it was now confident that labour market pressures were easing.

The claimant count measure of unemployment declined by 14,000 to 1.31 million, the lowest level of unemployment since July 1980. The Government's preferred International Labour Organisation measure of unemployment also slipped by 26,000 in the three months to November to total 1.79 million.

Other labour market measures showed surprising strength with employment growth measuring 98,000 in

the three months to November taking the total workforce to 27.63 million, a record high.

Only manufacturing employment levels and vacancies revealed any of the expected weakness. The number of people employed in the manufacturing sector slipped by 18,000 in November while the stock of unfilled vacancies fell by 4,000 in December.

Economists said that warm winter weather, allowing greater construction activity than usual, may have been the cause of higher than anticipated employment. However, the consensus remains that these figures will prove no more than a one-off and unemployment will begin to rise in the next few months.

Dharshini David, UK economist at HSBC, said: "These figures should not prevent the Bank of England from cutting base rates further in the next month or two."

Cuny leaves top job at BPB

By CARL MORTIMER

JEAN-PIERRE CUNY is leaving the top job at BPB, the plasterboard group, adding another company to a long list of troubled firms that have lost their chief executives.

BPB, which was raised by the European Commission in November in an enquiry into suspected price fixing, said yesterday that M. Cuny, 58, was taking early retirement.

A statement from the company read: "In the light of the current investigation in to the alleged infringement of Article 85 of the Treaty of Rome within the European gypsum industry, it would be appropriate for a new CEO to take the group forward."

David Leonard, 60, the chief operating officer, will defer his planned retirement by up to one year to fill the empty seat on the board. M. Cuny will be retained in a consultancy basis during the investigation. A spokesman said he would be paid £20,000 plus £1,500 for each day's work.

Germany and France warn ECB on rates

By ALASDAIR MURRAY

FRANCE and Germany yesterday turned up the heat on the newly created European Central Bank, publishing a joint memorandum warning the ECB over interest rate policy, calling for a more expansionist policy and warning about the risks of deflation.

"The central bank must not adopt a restrictive stance to fight inflation and, if unit labour costs fall, as they have done recently, then interest rates should be cut to prevent deflation," the memorandum said.

Wim Duisenberg, President of the ECB, has repeatedly said that interest rates are likely to remain unchanged for the foreseeable future.

Exchange rate and interest rate policy remain the sole preserve of the European Central Bank and analysts were sceptical that the Franco-German memorandum would make much difference to policy.

Green seeks support for Sears bid

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM, RETAIL CORRESPONDENT

PHILIP GREEN, the entrepreneur who has been laying siege to Sears, was last night seeking support from shareholders in the troubled retail group for a hostile bid at 340p a share.

The bid, which would depend on the support of Phillips & Drew, which holds 24 per cent of Sears, could be launched as early as today. P&D, which has to date backed the existing Sears management, refused to comment yesterday.

Sears continued its attempts to evade

takeover yesterday by announcing that it has sold its credit card business for £141 million, and will be returning £215 million (141p a share) in cash to shareholders in the spring. It previously said it would return £84 million.

The sale, to Group Cofinoga and Banque Nationale de Paris, and the expectation that Mr Green might go hostile, sent shares up 25p to 310p.

Sears appeared to have softened its position on the sale of Freemans, the catalogue business that Sir Bob Reid, its chairman, had insisted he would not

low Sears to return a further 100p a share, making a total of 240p.

Mr Green indicated before Christmas that he might offer 340p for the group, but that it was conditional on due diligence. Sir Bob said yesterday that this undervalued the assets. He said that the property that Sears is currently selling will be worth another 100p a share, equalling Mr Green's total even before Sears' clothing businesses are taken into account. The clothing businesses are Warehouse, Wallis, Richards and Adams children's wear.

Sears also revealed yesterday that

like-for-like sales in the clothing division declined 1 per cent in the second half to January 9 by 1 per cent. Freemans' like-for-like sales declined by 5 per cent.

Selfridges, the department store business demerged from Sears last year, said that it had a 3.2 per cent rise in like-for-like sales in the six weeks to January 9. It was helped by perfume and cosmetic sales which rose 12 per cent, while men's clothing sales slipped 1 per cent and women's clothing sales were flat.

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Pressure mounts on Post Office over buy

By Christine Buckley
INDUSTRIAL
CORRESPONDENT

THE Government yesterday faced growing controversy over the Post Office's first overseas purchase as concern mounted over the secrecy surrounding the deal and the amount of public money involved.

The Post Office will not say how much it paid for German Parcel — although the figure is thought to be up to £375 million — and neither it nor the Government will say how much public money is being spent.

Ian McCartney, minister with responsibility for the Post Office, told MPs they could work out the cost of the fourth biggest German parcel company from its sales — expected to be £265 million this year — and its other interests, which include 23 per cent of shares in a franchise business working in 30 countries. But that was no more information than the Post Office gave at the time of the deal.

However, a valuation of a business crucially depends on comparable companies and the profitability of the organisation, which is not being disclosed. Mr McCartney told the Commons that the Post Office should be accountable for its purchases. He added: "I would stress that other publicly and privately owned European post offices are making acquisitions. We do not know how much they are paying in most instances."

TNT, the rival Dutch distribution business, demanded equal treatment. Anthony Lock, marketing manager, said: "The British Post Office should be at least as accountable as us. We need a level playing field in order to guarantee transparency."

UPS is challenging a similar undisclosed purchase by Deutsche Post at the European Commission. If successful it is likely to go on to challenge the UK Post Office.

Richard Page, Conservative spokesman on the Post Office, condemned the way the Government had given the Post Office more commercial freedom while keeping it in public ownership as a "policy fudge".

A spokeswoman for the Department of Trade and Industry said some details of the German deal would be reported in the Post Office's accounts, which are submitted to the Government. However, she said they were likely to be vague.



Three Chinese soldiers were among the first people to try out furniture at a new Ikea store in Beijing, which was officially opened yesterday. It is Ikea's second

in China after its Shanghai store opened last year. The Swedish furniture manufacturer aims to expand in Russia, where it has plans for Moscow

and St Petersburg, and Asia. Last year Anders Moberg, chief executive, said the company had to alter its methods for the Chinese market to reflect the fact

that most Chinese live in very small apartments. The company says its mission is to make furniture for people who want to "create a better life".

Lucent Technologies agrees \$20bn takeover of Ascend

FROM OLIVER AUGUST
IN NEW YORK

LUCENT TECHNOLOGIES has agreed to buy Ascend, the manufacturer of phone switching equipment, for \$20 billion (£12.3 billion) in a deal that could trigger further industry consolidation.

In the two years since the group was spun off by AT&T, Lucent has initiated 18 takeovers in an effort to outflank its rival Cisco, the \$150 billion Internet hardware maker.

Fueled by takeovers and the exploding interest in Internet technology, Lucent's share

price has doubled since October going from \$50 to \$100. Lucent currently has a market value of \$136 billion and will vault past Cisco once the Ascend deal is approved and completed.

Each share of Ascend will be converted into 0.825 Lucent shares under the merger agreement. Wall Street welcomed the deal but gave warning of risks.

Analyst predict that Lucent could reshape the future of the market for telecommunications equipment. It is currently being besieged by phone companies who are hurriedly

trying to add Internet capabilities to their networks.

Lucent is one of the oldest suppliers of the traditional equipment used by phone companies. The combination will be by far Lucent's biggest acquisition to date.

Analysts also said that one of the problems that Lucent faces is retaining staff. In the wake of previous acquisitions, key staff at the acquired companies have left soon afterwards and made integrating the businesses difficult.

Ascend was formed in 1989, and first made a name for itself with a product called a re-

mote access concentrator. That device, which cost tens of thousands of dollars, allowed hundreds or even thousands of remote computers to connect to a network over telephone lines.

Previously, each of those lines had required a separate modem to make a link, and the breakthrough by Ascend made the company a fixture and force in the market.

In 1997 Ascend significantly broadened its product line with the \$3.7 billion purchase of Cascade Communications, which made a line of high-speed networking gear using a

technology called Asynchronous Transfer Mode, or ATM.

Bob Bellman, an analyst with Brooktrill Research, said: "Lucent needs the gear and the credibility in the market that Ascend can bring them. But I don't know if they can pull it off. Lucent is such a big company, it may just eat up Ascend, and not produce very much."

Daniel Briere, an analyst at Telechoice, said: "The perception is that it is going a lot better than people had expected. There's a good culture fit."

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BAA records recovery in Asian traffic

AIR traffic to Asia is recovering from its collapse at the beginning of last year, as East Asian economies begin to recover and tourists take advantage of the fall in local currencies (Carl Morfitt writes).

Figures reported yesterday by BAA show a 4.8 per cent rise in traffic on Far East services. Overall, BAA's airports

experienced a 7.7 per cent gain in passenger numbers over December 1997. Traffic for the full year in 1998 was up 7 per cent to a record 110.6 million passengers. Stansted is still BAA's fastest-growing airport, with 41 per cent more passengers than in December 1997.



David Field, marketing director of BAA, sets the delivery of new transit trains at Stansted

IPC to shed 600 jobs in shake-up

By Raymond Snoddy
MEDIA EDITOR

IPC Magazines, the UK's biggest consumer magazine publisher, yesterday announced a radical restructuring and about 200 redundancies designed to save £6 million a year.

The changes, coming a year after the £860 million management buyout from Reed Elsevier backed by Civen, followed a review of the business.

Each of the five IPC publishing groups — women's weeklies, TV weeklies, SouthBank, country and leisure, and music and sport, will become separate subsidiaries with their own boards and budgets. The aim, said Mike Matthews, chief executive, was to help to make the group "more entrepreneurial and fleet of foot".

Most of the redundancies are expected to come from the ranks of middle management. "We are trying to focus as much as possible away from the fighting troops, the ad sales force and the journalists," said Mr Matthews, who conceded however he could not guarantee there would be no journalist or advertising job losses.

The restructuring will cost about £5 million but IPC believes that annualised savings of £6 million will be achieved.

The IPC titles range from *Country Life* and *Loaded* to *TV Times* and *Marie Claire*.

Major withdraws from B&B board campaign

By Caroline Merrell

STEPHEN MAJOR, the carpenter trying to force the Bradford & Bingley to become a bank, has unexpectedly withdrawn his nomination to be elected to the board.

However, a resolution put forward by Mr Major proposing Bradford & Bingley's flotation, which would result in an estimated £1,000 windfall to each of the society's 25 million members, will be voted on at the society's annual meeting in April.

Mr Major, 35, a quantity surveyor turned plumber who

lives in Co Antrim, said he had withdrawn his board nomination because he feared that he would be subjected to too much public scrutiny.

He said: "I think that everyone would have concentrated on me rather than on the resolution." Mr Major said he had already been stung by comments casting doubt on his surveyor's qualifications.

He said he wanted the society to convert because he felt that it was a route that Christopher Rodrigues, his chief execu-

tive, would take. He said: "He is just building up the assets of the society so he can float it."

Bradford & Bingley is one of seven societies under siege by members trying to force conversion. The other six have received board member applications and resolutions from Michael Hardern, who last year failed by the narrowest of margins to force Nationwide, the UK's biggest building society, to float.

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Liffe trades fall as dealers pick Eurex

By Richard Miles

TRADING volumes on Liffe, the international futures and options exchange, fell 7 per cent last year as dealers switched their allegiance to Eurex, a rival trading system based in Frankfurt.

A 37 per cent increase in the daily trading of short-term interest rate contracts (Stirs) failed to offset a considerable loss of business in German bond futures during the second half of 1998.

On a more positive note, the value of average daily trades rose 22 per cent to £220 billion,

a record performance that reflected the exchange's growing dependence on Stirs contracts as the level of bond business diminished.

Liffe has lost ground to Eurex because of its determination until last year to stick with open outcry trading, even though electronic dealing is not only less expensive, but permits firms to carry out business remotely.

The exchange introduced its own version of screen-based trading for equity options, Liffe Connect, at the end of November,

BASF plans €1bn share buyback

BASF, the chemicals group, is planning a one billion euro (£700 million) share buyback, the largest capital repayment in Germany to date. The cash-rich company said it would begin buying immediately and BASF shares gained 1 per cent in a falling German stock market. The company said it would initially buy up to 5 per cent of its capital, representing some 31 million shares. In a statement yesterday the company said: "In BASF's view the price of the company's shares is significantly too low, which means that the present time is particularly favourable for a purchase."

BASF had cash resources of DM3.9 billion at the end of the third quarter and analysts speculated that the weak outlook for the chemicals industry left it with few investment opportunities. However, a spokesman said that the buyback was not an indication that the company had ruled out acquisitions. "We have always been a cash-rich company and we will still have the financial capacity to do deals," BASF had signalled to shareholders last March its intention to buy back stock but the Government's recent decision not to tax such transactions prompted a flurry of buyback moves, including those by BFG Bank and Schering.

House prices up 1%

HOUSE prices in the UK rose 1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 1998, according to the Halifax house price index, slightly below the 1.3 per cent rise of the third quarter. The sharp regional divergence in house-price inflation seen over the past two years has started to level off in the second half of 1998, although the North/South divide is still evident with inflation about 9 per cent in the South compared with 2 per cent in the North. House prices in the North fell 1.5 per cent and by 1 per cent in Northern Ireland, while prices rose 3.2 per cent in the South East.

Arnault rules out bid

BERNARD ARNAULT, chairman of LVMH, has ruled out a full takeover bid for Gucci in the short term, saying he is content with being the largest shareholder in the Italian fashion house. Shares of Gucci, which have shot up 55 per cent on takeover speculation, fell 5 per cent in Amsterdam yesterday. Mr Arnault said: "LVMH makes clear that it does not plan, under the current circumstances, to launch a bid" — but said he now owns more than 15 per cent after adding Prada's 9.5 per cent to the shares LVMH has snapped up on the market.

Germany index move

GERMANY'S premier stock index will no longer be calculated on the floor of the Frankfurt stock exchange. The move forms part of a shift to electronic trading. In future, the Xetra DAX index of 30 shares, which is calculated on the basis of electronic dealing, will be the leading measure of Germany's stock market. Currently the two indices run parallel to each other. Frankfurt's stock market is now dominated by electronic trading. Lack of volume has hurt the old DAX index, reducing its ability to measure market sentiment.

DTI seeks Creative order

THE Department of Trade and Industry has applied to the High Court to wind up Creative Independent Productions, a film production company based at the Elstree Film Studios, after a DTI investigation. The DTI said it was acting in the public interest after Creative had embarked on a scheme to raise finance from the public for the production of a science fiction film named *The Return*. The Court yesterday appointed the Official Receiver as provisional liquidator of the company, pending a full hearing on January 20.

Radio joint venture

Chris Evans and his Ginger Media Group will today announce a joint venture with Unique Broadcasting to create a radio production company, G One. The aim is that the new company will become a major player in the independent radio production sector. The Ginger Media Group was formed last year in an £85 million deal that put together Ginger Productions and Virgin Radio. Unique produces the *Peep Show* for commercial radio and the Richard Allison evening programme for BBC Radio 2.

Limelight recovering

LIMELIGHT, the home lighting company, said its recovery well under way with underlying sales up by 8 per cent during the first two weeks of its January sale. Trading conditions remain tough, and it remains too soon to draw conclusions. Limelight is expected to make an £8 million profit this year, after falling £12.3 million into the red last time. The company was founded in the 1970s by the late Stephen Boier, who made £50 million when it joined the market at nearly 200p a share in 1996. The shares added 3p to a four-month high of 334p.

Changes at Paribas

PARIBAS, the French financial group, often criticised by analysts for having a complicated and unwieldy structure, said it was reorganising in an effort to improve profitability. Paribas said it was bringing together its different activities into four core business lines. Paribas Principal Investments (PAI), its own industrial investment holdings, would be separated from its core investment banking business. The four core business lines will be investment banking, proprietary investments, asset management and retail financial services.

EasyJet's first profit

EASYJET, the low-price airline, yesterday reported its first profit on a 65 per cent increase in passengers. For the year to September 30, pre-tax profit was £2.32 million, from a loss of £3.3 million last time. The airline flew 1.7 million passengers and reported a turnover of £77 million, up 67 per cent. EasyJet said that internet bookings have risen to 40 per cent of total bookings during promotional periods. The airline is to take on eight new Boeing 737-300s, boosting its fleet strength to 20. Another 15 Boeing aircraft, 737-700s, will join in late 2000.

WHO'S WHO 1999

Published today

A&C BLACK

Wembley's big match for Guinness Mahon

By Jason Nisse

THE Football Association has appointed Guinness Mahon, the merchant bank, as adviser to raise the £200 million it says it needs to redevelop Wembley Stadium.

The move comes after the FA agreed a £103 million deal to buy the site from Wembley, the quoted company that owns the site. The purchase, which is being funded by a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, has been under discussion since April.

Bob Stubbs, chief executive of the English National Stadium Development Company,

the FA subsidiary that will buy the stadium, says that the redevelopment will be funded by debt finance. He said that the ENSDC would apply for planning permission for the site in the summer.

The sale has still to be approved by Wembley shareholders. A circular is due to go out to them early next month for an extraordinary meeting later in February.

Three non-executive directors of the company, Peter Mead, Jarvis Astaire and Roger Brooke, have said that they object to the deal and Enic, the

football investment company, has indicated last week that it may make a £180-p-a share bid for Wembley.

Enic, which was founded by Joe Lewis, the Bahamas-based billionaire, refused to say whether the agreement to sell the stadium to the FA would change its position on whether it would now make a bid for Wembley.

The company's shares fell 22p to 351p, largely on fears that Enic would withdraw from the fray.

Tempus, page 28

Chiroscience wins US support for anaesthetic

By Paul Durman

CHIROSCIENCE, the drug development company, has won official backing for its local anaesthetic to be approved in the United States but it may struggle to differentiate the product from the market leader.

The Cambridge company claims Chirocaine is a safer version of Astra's bupivacaine, sold as Marcaine, and is less likely to cause the heart to slow to a stop. An advisory committee to the US Food and Drug Administration agreed that Chirocaine was safe and effective, but

most panel members were unconvinced of its advantages over the Astra drug.

According to a detailed account of the FDA panel meeting in *BioCentury Extra*, an FDA medical officer concluded: "There is no clear evidence that [Chirocaine] differs substantially from bupivacaine in cardiovascular toxicity."

An FDA statistician said Chirocaine's data were consistent with its claims but "the same data can be used to draw a different conclusion".

John Savin, analyst at Greig Middleton, said: "This

could be just a pyrrhic victory for Chiroscience. I don't see anybody investing really heavily in it unless there's a significant safety claim."

However, John Padfield, Chiroscience's chief executive, the committee's recommendation for Chirocaine's approval was "extraordinarily positive" and was broader than the recent Swedish approval.

Chirocaine is regarded as the first important new pharmaceutical to emerge from the UK's biotech industry. Dr Padfield hopes it will be on sale in the US later this year.

Bank	Buy	Sell
Australia	2.71	2.72
Austria	20.48	18.78
Belgium	90.22	95.26
Canada	2.64	2.74
Cyprus	0.856	0.7941
Denmark	11.11	10.25
France	6.85	6.21
Germany	9.78	9.25
Greece	2.958	2.698
Hong Kong	12.80	12.47
Ireland	127	107
Italy	1.7171	1.673
Japan	7.11	6.48
Netherlands	202.80	188.97
New Zealand	3.19	2.95
Portugal	12.84	12.40
Spain	268.00	252.00
Sweden	10.74	9.70
Switzerland	248.70	227.50
Taiwan	2.38	2.23
USA	54.00	50.92
UK	1.75	1.68

Notes for small denominations: only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates at close of trading yesterday.

Markets go through the flaw

COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

Is this the beginning of the end for the bull market? The FTSE 100 staggered back from its biggest ever points fall but was still left looking groggy. That events in Brazil could trigger such drastic reactions in the world's stock markets highlighted what the bears have been bellowing for many months: prices are terribly fragile, the levels unsustainable on any previously known criteria and a fall inevitable.

Brazil's precarious financial predicament has been a dark cloud on the world's investment screens for many months. Yesterday it took on a more defined and threatening shape and cast shadows from Latin America onto the United States, and thence Europe. The prospect of the US economy succumbing to reality market up with more of a start than the fallout in the Far East or Russia could ever have done. This was worse than the summer slip back or the ructions over Long Term Capital Management. This time, investors were genuinely scared.

And with good reason. Never mind the irrational exuberance which perturbed the Federal Reserve's Alan Greenspan, plain rationality is what best describes the current stock market ratings. While a superficial glance will say that the FTSE 100 is showing but a moderate gain on a year ago, that has been achieved largely thanks to the extraordinary

performance of pharmaceuticals and telecoms shares. The latter have more than doubled since the beginning of last year, and they did not start from a lowly base.

Those who would believe that the stock market would continue powering onwards and upwards cannot find justification in such old-fashioned ideas as earnings. As companies which have yet to turn a profit power into the FTSE, the optimists are reduced to quoting the "weight of money" argument. Institutions have oodles of cash flowing into their coffers and they have to put it somewhere, goes the argument. But it is flawed. Already the institutions are shunning small cap stocks in favour of the biggest FTSE companies: the small cap index has come nowhere near regaining its peak of last spring, and is still around 25 per cent below it.

If they are already confining themselves to investing in only a few stocks, there must be a point at which the institutions admit to being over-weight in them. At that stage — and it must be imminent — they just have to find somewhere else to put the cash. There is little to suggest that they

will opt for other stocks and property may, once again, attract more attention. When a business such as Dixons can have its shares so favourably re-rated on the basis that it is giving away Internet access, it is time to call a halt to such stock market madness. The Internet may be exciting but investing institutions, and more importantly, their savers, cannot afford to ignore fundamentals.

Hard lesson in cash creation

Has Sir Bob Reid found enough cash to buy him his shareholders' support? It is asking what positive effects the hot breath of a bidder can have, even on those who, like Sir Bob, prefer to deny the existence of such a phenomenon. So yesterday Sir Bob Reid chalked up a first in producing a deal that actually exceeded market expecta-

tions. But while the looming presence of Philip Green may have turned the former rail chief into a consummate deal-maker and whizz-bang retailer, even the most ardent believer in the Second Coming would have to accept that the odds are not encouraging.

Sir Bob has achieved a good price for Creation, Sears's credit card business, and he will shovel it out to shareholders as quickly as he can. Long-suffering Sears investors could grab the 14p a share and aim to put it somewhere rather safer than Sears has been. That, however, would still leave them to put their faith in Sir Bob to either emerge or sell Freeman and squeeze a better return out of the retail chains that remain in the group. Given that Freeman is but a leafless version of the catalogue business it once was — sales down a further 5 per cent, Sir Bob admitted yesterday — the price must be heading south even if he could find a buyer. To

attempt the promised demerger would seem to pose a daunting task for the most adventurous prospectus writer.

Similarly, the retail chains have seen sales slipping backwards. Life is tough in the high street and there is little reason to think that it is going to get any easier for the next couple of years. Sir Bob may contend that Sears is worth well over the 340p that Philip Green has proposed but, if Mr Green puts his cash on the table, shareholders will have to weigh up whether they will feel more comfortable with his money in the bank or Sir Bob's promises in yet another annual report that promises to enhance shareholder value.

The stock market's plunge yesterday might well encourage investors towards the relative safety of cash. The chairman may have no difficulty in putting a value of more than £5 on the company but Sears's own brokers struggled to come up with much

more than 325p a share. Without the prospect of a bid, the price might be expected to sink back closer to the lowly levels at which it was lurking before Mr Green appeared on the scene. The Reid valuation relies on optimism, but shareholders have had a miserable experience.

A Major move in the right direction

Typical. It takes ages to get hold of a plumber, then once he turns up you find that he is not able to complete the job.

It would be easy to caricature Stephen Major, the plumber-contractor surveyor who is leading the battle to convert Bradford & Bingley into a bank, as a man of straw. Why else would he withdraw from the fray at a crucial moment? But before Chris Rodrigues starts popping the champagne corks, he might consider whether this is a strategic withdrawal by Mr Major. Maybe the chances of B&B's members going for conversion have been enhanced by his decision not to stand for the board. This is not to do down Mr Major: he is probably more blame-

less than most plumbers. And we can surely discount suggestions that B&B might contemplate hiring private detectives to probe cupboards in search of skeletons. But there is no doubt that the publicity about Michael Hardern's freelance butlering, and the photographs of him in a Britannia building society wearing a sarong, did not aid his fight to convert the Nationwide into a bank.

Too many voters identified the campaign with Mr Hardern's eccentricities. As it was, Nationwide only remained a building society by the narrowest of margins. Mr Major's decision to withdraw allows the B&B members to concentrate on the issues, which should make this fight a better indicator of the future of building societies than the Nationwide vote.

Pint-sized problem

WOLVERHAMPTON & Dudley Breweries is not alone in shedding the odd tair into its beer over disappointing sales. A company faced with fending off a Pac-Man defence to its bid for Marston, Thompson & Eversheds might have hoped for more bullish bulls but it can blame the market, for the hiccup. Yet W&DB has indicated why Marston's, owner of the trendy Fitcher & Piano chain, could not countenance the takeover. Oh, the indignity of being bought by a company that has "wet-led managed concepts".

Whitbread and Nomura calm investor nerves

By DOMINIC WALSH

INVESTOR nervousness, sparked by Allied Domecq's surprise profit warning, was allayed yesterday as both Whitbread and Nomura's Unique Pub Company painted a less gloomy picture of Christmas trading.

Shares of Whitbread edged 8p higher to 775p as the brewing and leisure group reported that sales during December were slightly ahead of last year. However, Allied's woes continued as its shares lost a further 19p to 497p, taking the total loss over two days to 100p — equivalent to more than £1 billion off the market value.

In a trading statement, Whitbread said that while comparable sales in food-led pubs and

restaurants had been affected by the slowdown in consumer spending, its hotel and leisure divisions were continuing to exhibit growth.

Analysts estimated that its drinks-led outlets had seen a 1 per cent decline in like-for-like sales against a market down 2 per cent. However, both its Travel Inn and Marriott hotel chains improved while comparable profits from its David Lloyd Leisure clubs rose by about 7 per cent.

David Thomas, chief executive of Whitbread, said: "The spread of our businesses and our strong brands give us a degree of protection in continuing difficult trading conditions."

Meanwhile, Giles Thorley,

chief executive of the 2,600-strong Unique Pub Company, said there had been a "healthy pick-up in trading" in the two weeks before Christmas. He added: "Volumes in our pubs showed a couple of percentage points growth compared with last year."

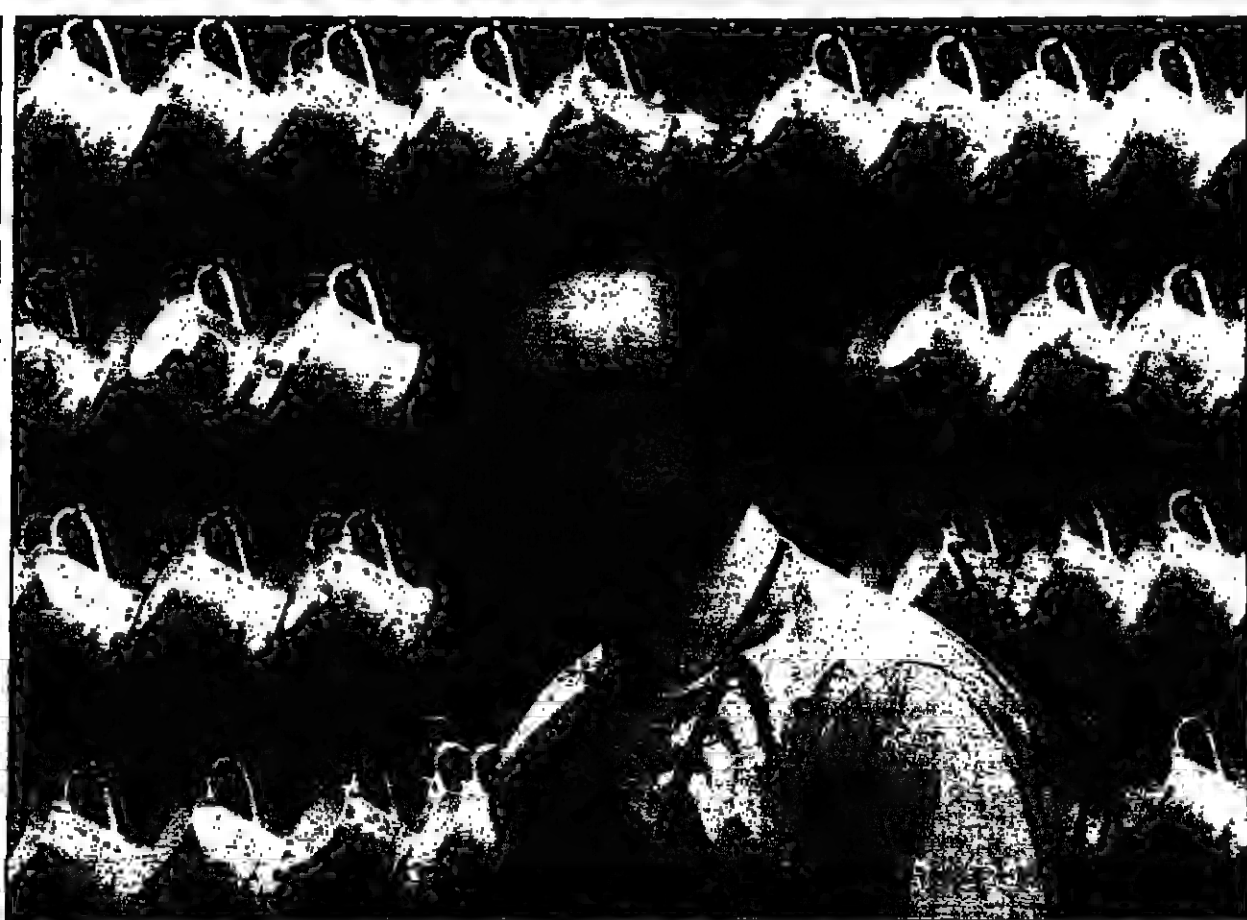
Lower down the scale, Wolverhampton & Dudley Breweries said that after a slow start in October and November, trade has strengthened over Christmas and the new year. Like-for-like liquor sales grew by 2.6 per cent and total retail sales were up 1.8 per cent, with its community pubs performing particularly well.

David Thompson, W&DB's managing director, cautioned that the trading environment remained tough, but the company was keeping a tight rein on costs.

Analysts believe that Wolves will this week increase its £262 million bid for Marston, Thompson & Eversheds, its Midlands rival, which last week launched a £330 million counterbid for W&DB. The potential cost-savings from such a move are crucial to Mr Thompson's arguments and he is expected to revise his previous £12 million estimate upwards.

His strategy of retaining all three breweries was lent support by Scottish & Newcastle, which contracts out some of its brewing to Wolves. Tom Ward, brewing director for Scottish Courage, said W&DB was achieving excellent unit costs adding: "It runs a pretty good operation."

Tempos, page 28



Will Hobhouse said that Whittard had faced a difficult year with customers being more careful in their shopping

Warning knocks Whittard

SHARES in Whittard of Chelsea, the tea and coffee retailer, fell by 22 per cent yesterday after the company issued a warning that profits for the year will be below market expectations because of a "continued tough trading environment" (Matthew Barbour writes).

Shares in the group, which moved from the Alternative Investment Market to the full market just over a year ago, fell 20p to 71p.

Whittard, which owns more than 100 outlets in the UK and has franchise stores overseas, said discounting to protect sales volumes had resulted in a margin squeeze. Like-for-like sales for the year to date are 2.5 per cent lower than last year although total sales rose 11.2 per cent. For the year to May 31, 1998, pre-tax profits were £3 million on sales of £32.4 million, when the shares hit a high of 231p. Will Hobhouse, managing director, said: "It's been a difficult year; customers have been more careful in their shopping."

Internet fever sends Dixons' shares higher

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM

SHARES of Dixons shot higher yesterday as the craze for Internet-related stocks crossed the Atlantic.

The company said it had attracted 900,000 users to FreeServe, its free Internet service, launched four months ago. Hopes that it will be able to make large profits from the business through third-party agreements and advertising propelled the stock's rise to a record high of 958p, a rise of 44p.

John Clare, chief executive, said that FreeServe will break even this year. From then on, he said: "Profitability will be linked to the growth of the Internet. Internet trading is growing and FreeServe puts us in a strong position. It opens up a whole host of opportunities such as financial services, travel agencies, hotel bookings." Such services would be offered through deals with third parties, he said.

Richard Edwards, retail analyst at Salomon Smith Barney, said: "There is a scarce supply of Internet plays. Dixons is worth 800p

from a straight retail point of view, the problem is how do you value FreeServe?"

Wall Street has been gripped by Internet fever since a number of electronic commerce companies reported strong Christmas sales. With many of the stocks now on very high valuations, the Wall Street buying frenzy has tapered off this week, with some Internet stocks taking a tumble.

Dixons reported that pre-tax profits for the six months to November 14 were £80.9 million (£77.1 million), excluding a £12 million charge to cover the cost of integrating the retail business of Seaboard, which it acquired last year. The company is paying an interim dividend of 3.5p (2.9p) on basic earnings that fell to 11.6p a share from 12.5p.

The company said sales of personal computers, computer games and mobile phones had been strong over Christmas, but sales of domestic appliances were slow.

Ice Box, page 29

BA agrees Japan Airlines tie-up

By CARL MORTSHED

BRITISH AIRWAYS has agreed to a marketing and code-sharing tie-up with Japan Airlines aimed at increasing BA's access to the important air travel market in the northern Pacific. JAL is expected to join BA's Oneworld Alliance, which includes Cathay Pacific and Qantas.

BA said that the two airlines had agreed to link their frequent-flyer programmes and schemes and to code-share on their routes. BA cut back its exposure to the Japanese market last year, ending flights to Osaka. The airline said yesterday that the link-up with JAL would increase access to the Japanese market without the need to invest in new routes.

BA's existing frequent-flyer link with rival Japanese airline ANA will cease on September 30. ANA, which has extensive domestic routes in Japan, has said it intends to join the rival Star Alliance, led by Lufthansa.

BA shares rose 5p to 401p yesterday, against the sharp stock market fall. However, they remain at a big discount to last year's high of 703p, struck before the beginning of Asia's financial crisis.

A stream of new long-term contracts from London Electricity, Halifax and Marks & Spencer helped pre-tax profits to £7.54 million (£4.31 million) for six months to October 31. Mrs Cropper has reduced her stake from 8.8 per cent to 6.5 per cent. FI's 7,000 employees own 40 per cent of shares. Headline earnings were 2.62p (1.66p) per share, and the interim dividend is 0.63p (0.43p).

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Chemicals firms face slowdown

EUROPE'S £264 billion chemical industry is set for a slowdown in 1999 under pressure from rising imports and threatened by macroeconomic factors, the Chemical Industries Association (CIA) forecast yesterday.

The CIA said European production is expected to match a 1998 forecasted rise of 2 per cent, which was revised down from last year's 1998 prediction of 3.5 per cent.

The CIA, which represents about 200 British chemical producers, said its members were threatened by the strong pound and economic malaise.

BP backs tax to cut carbon emissions

By CARL MORTSHED

BP Amoco, Britain's largest oil company, said yesterday that energy taxes should play a role in providing incentives to reduce carbon emissions.

Rodney Chase, deputy chief executive, said that emissions trading was the most economic and effective way to reduce emissions. However, in a speech to the Fabian Society, he conceded that a tax that rewards corporate behaviour could play a role in meeting Kyoto targets on carbon emissions. His remarks are likely to fuel controversy in an industry that is deeply divided over glo-

bal warming. The Kyoto Protocol, which sets out targets for the reduction in carbon emissions, has aroused fierce opposition from US oil majors, led by Exxon, who reject the need to curb fuel consumption and pour scorn on suggestions that fossil fuel burning is a cause of climate change. Until recently, Amoco was an opponent of Kyoto but BP has spoken out in favour of measures to reduce carbon emission, closely followed by Shell. Energy taxes would be likely to hurt the oil majors with large capital intensive and fuel-consumptive plant.

Pearson wants to be a millionaire

By RAYMOND SNOODY, MEDIA EDITOR



Chris Tarrant, the host of Who Wants to be a Millionaire?

PEARSON TELEVISION, the world's largest producer of television game shows, is negotiating to buy the overseas rights to the latest ITV hit show, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*

The programme, produced by Celador Productions, an independent company and presented by Chris Tarrant, has been attracting audiences as high as 17 million.

Pearson Television, part of the Pearson media and information group, is in negotiations to buy the format rights so it can try to replicate the show's success around the world.

Pearson claims to make about 90 per cent of the leading game shows in world television markets through the acquisition of companies such as Grundy and All American.

Yesterday, Pearson announced the purchase of a 10.9 per cent stake in E-Pub Holdings, a leading US online entertainment company.

Under the deal, the two companies will develop online versions of several of Pearson's game shows, including *Family Feud*, *Match Game* and *Password*, on Upstart, E-Pub's gameshow website.

The stake in E-Pub Holdings would normally be worth £13 million but Pearson is paying only £800,000 because of the intellectual property the British company is bringing to the venture. If the first games are a success, Pearson will be able to increase its stake in E-Pub.

Greg Dyke, chairman and chief executive of Pearson Television, said: "E-Pub has the online gameshow expertise to bring our television properties to the growing Internet audience."

The initial deal between Pearson and E-Pub will run for two years.

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STOCK MARKET



MICHAEL CLARKE

Investors count cost as Brazil crisis hits FTSE

INVESTORS in the City were last night counting the cost of the worsening economic crisis in Brazil.

Share prices in New York, London and other European financial markets fell sharply in response to news of Brazil's currency devaluation.

At one stage, the FTSE 100 index tumbled almost 300 points, reflecting a loss of 260 points for the Dow Jones industrial average in early trading on Wall Street.

In the event, the FTSE managed to reduce the loss to 183.5 at 5.50 p.m. by the close, while the FTSE 250 index shed 102.7 at 4.87 p.m.

Brokers said there was evidence of concerted selling as a total of 1.12 billion shares changed hands. The London market appeared braced for further falls.

In the futures pit, the March series closed just five points above the cash market, indicating a discount to true value.

Blue chips suffered the heaviest falls with the banks, pharmaceuticals and engineering companies particularly hard hit.

Among the casualties Glaxo Wellcome fell 9p to £21.33, Granada Group 45p to £11.00, Orange 60p to 87p, Smiths Industries 61p to 80.3p, Royal & Sun Alliance 39p to 48.3p, and Zeneca 71p to £26.73.

Tuesday's profits warning from Allied Domecq, 19p lower at 49p, had a knock-on effect in Bass, down 18p to 78.5p. Lehman Brothers, the US securities house, has taken the opportunity to reiterate its bearish stance on the shares.

It says the big four, Allied, Bass, Whitbread, 8p dearer at 77.5p, and Scottish & Newcastle, 28p off at 68.4p, face the prospect of negative investment returns from the heavy spending programmes in their respective pub chains.

Boots was a nervous market, retreating 11p to 99.8p in heavy trading that saw more than two million shares change hands ahead of today's trading statement. Brokers are worried that the chemist had not enjoyed the spending spree at Christmas that had been hoped for.

Brokers remain clearly impressed with the growth of Dixons' free internet service Freeview with the price adding 44p to 95p. Like-for-like sales of the consumer electronics retailer, which is chaired by Sir Stanley Kalms, rose 3 per cent over the



Sir Stanley Kalms, right, and John Clare, the chief executive of Dixons, saw a 44p rise on the back of Freeview's success

Christmas period. WH Smith also has its own book store on the Web which was behind its rise of 20p to 53p.

Meanwhile, City investors continued to clamour for Internet stocks which have not enjoyed the success in the UK commanded by their US counterparts. Even so, many traders

take the view that they remain high-risk ventures. On-Line, where the directors were forced to unload 150,000 shares on Tuesday to improve liquidity, surged another 12p to 57p.

They started the week at 17p. Dan Wagner's Dialog Corporation was 1p firmer at 74p.

Bid talk helped Guardian Royal Exchange to maintain its composure in a falling market with the price closing 1p dearer at 33.7p. It follows a re-

port in *The Times* indicating that the group is close to agreeing the terms of a bid from the French insurer Axa.

Allied Zurich came off 27p at 92.5p as BT Alex Brown, the broker, urged clients to switch into rival CGU, 33p off at 89p.

Moving against the trend Blagden Industries firmed 14p to 132p. Dealers say a bid could be on the way, having seen the shares plunge from a peak of 185p since November.

What is going on at Blagden, a 25p at 61.2p? Professor John Rhodes, chairman, travelled down from Yorkshire to the Square Mile yesterday, where he was seen with one of his corporate advisers.

The cellular and cable communications specialist has been linked with Airtech, all-square at 35p, which earlier this week announced it had received a bid approach.

Luximair received 10p to 66p after Mercury Asset Management reduced its holding in the night club operator from 48 per cent to 42.5 per cent.

There were some interesting trades going through on the taker in Aegis Group, 14p firmer at 101p. This included several lines of 750,000 shares, John Amerman, a non executive director, has bought 10,429 shares at 91p, taking his total holding to 21,338.

Talk of a bid fuelled a rise of 14p to 129p in T Clarke. The construction group trades in an illiquid market where dealers are normally only prepared to make a price in 1,000 shares at a time.

At Gilthead, the growing Brazilian debt crisis may have undermined equities, but provided a further welcome flip to the bond market.

Prices among longer-dated issues stretched to more than £2, at one stage, with the best gains seen in the eight to ten-year range. But the best levels were not always held.

In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt rose 7p to £119.51 as the total number of contracts completed reached 49,000. In bonds, Treasury 8 per cent 2021 touched £151.26 before finishing £135 dearer at £150.50, while in shorts Treasury 7 per cent 2002 put on 10p at £107.91.

CINEWORK: Shares were sharply down in late morning trade but were off their lows by midday. The Dow Jones industrial average was down 176.87 at 9,297.81.

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At Gilthead, the growing Brazilian debt crisis may have undermined equities, but provided a further welcome flip to the bond market.

Prices among longer-dated issues stretched to more than £2, at one stage, with the best gains seen in the eight to ten-year range. But the best levels were not always held.

In the futures pit, the March series of the long gilt rose 7p to £119.51 as the total number of contracts completed reached 49,000. In bonds, Treasury 8 per cent 2021 touched £151.26 before finishing £135 dearer at £150.50, while in shorts Treasury 7 per cent 2002 put on 10p at £107.91.

CINEWORK: Shares were sharply down in late morning trade but were off their lows by midday. The Dow Jones industrial average was down 176.87 at 9,297.81.

New York (midday):

Dow Jones 9297.81 (-176.87)

S&P Composite 1225.29 (-14.22)

Tokyo: Nikkei Average 15403.60 (-42.83)

Hong Kong: Hang Seng 10273.71 (-437.79)

Amsterdam: AEX Index 307.29 (-26.95)

Sydney: All Ordinaries 2822.0 (-24.3)

Frankfurt: DAX 4831.80 (-88.33)

Singapore: S&P 1506.06 (-30.52)

Brussels: BEL 2415.15 (-51.85)

Paris: CAC-40 3893.72 (+141.38)

Zurich: SMI 1440.00 (-52.59)

London: FT 30 3491.1 (-110.8)

FTSE 100 3491.1 (-110.8)

FTSE 250 4974.1 (-102.5)

FTSE 350 2781.1 (-42.2)

FTSE Europe 100 2705.8 (-115.1)

FTSE Asia Pacific 2720.8 (-45.2)

FTSE Real Estate 187.27 (+0.22)

FTSE New Sector 119.56 (+0.31)

SEAD Volume 1130.8m

US: S&P 500 1832.2 (+0.02)

Euro: Euronext 4706.6 (+0.02)

Settlement Index: 1.715

Bank of England official rate (p.m.): 5.75%

9p: 184.4 Nov (2.0%) Jan 1997-100

10p: 182.0 Nov (2.5%) Jan 1997-100

ABN VCI 100

Abbey Natl Dublin Inv 93

BFS Oases Inc & Gulf Cap 96

BFS Oases Inc & Gulf Cap 121

Charlton 117

Collective Assets Trust 117

Frenchco Objects 270

First Asia 315

Five Arts Ltd Co Ltd 112

Marley B 11

Natl Bldg Mts Ctr Pl 105

Natural Building Mts 97

Financial Growth Tr 97

GEM 5 (100) 98

Sage & Fnd AM VCI 108

Williamson 77

Xenon Warrants 16

Yoonan Equity Units 97

Yoonan Int'l Tr Inc 92

Yoonan Zero Div Pl 112

EMAP Nip (875) 200

Recognition Systems Int (8) 3

SQ Media (15) 1

RISES:

Stock 1125

China 14

Holland 107

Holland 107

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Morgan cast down

THE profit warning from Morgan Crucible is certainly dire news for shareholders. At 183p the shares now trade at barely a third of the 500p they were worth last May.

But the significance of the bad news should not be lost on those who invest more widely. Here is a company with an excellent reputation. Its profits and dividends have grown steadily for the past five years. The management is thoughtful and experienced. Its geographical product and customer mix is wide, giving it relatively little exposure to problems that could knock sales to one or two segments. It has number one market positions in 50 per cent of its business.

Yes, Crucible is an engineer and these sorts of company have struggled to find favour. Sentiment for Morgan is not helped by the fact that its has failed to find buyers for the non-

core businesses that it put for sale sign over last September. But if this normally reliable, mainstream global business can deliver such a nasty surprise, it means that precious few companies can be said to be immune from the economic and industrial uncertainties that are swirling.

Down 79p or 30 per cent yesterday the shares are changing hands for the equivalent of only eight times expected earnings per share for 1998. Dividend cover is likely to come in at about 1.5 times and while a cut in the payment is unlikely — unless things get a lot worse — the final looks as if it will be held, giving a gross yield of 11 per cent.

The ratios give the impression that Morgan is worse off than it really is and the shares are worth holding in the hope of a bounce. But it is grim out there.

Whitbread

IN THE wake of its shock profit warning on Tuesday, Allied Domecq suggested that the poor trading in its pubs was an industry-wide problem. Yesterday's update from Whitbread, however, undermines Allied's defence.

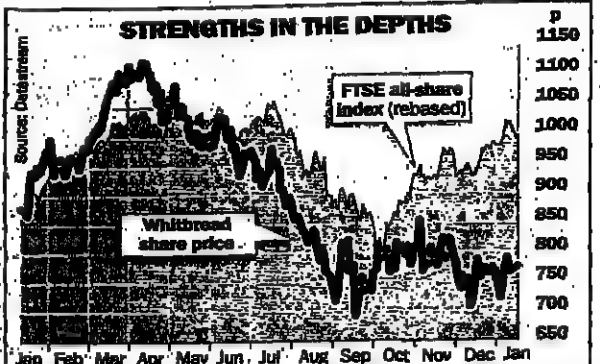
It is becoming clear that Allied is faring rather worse than some of its more nimble-footed competitors. To compound its crime, Allied failed to get its downbeat message across to investors. It is probably no coincidence that the true picture, in all its gory detail, came out the very day before Philip Bowman officially took the reins as finance director. There is nothing like wiping the slate clean as you start a new job.

That is not to say that Whitbread has emerged unscathed. For much of the past year the shares have felt the

backwash from weaker consumer spending. In the more recent festive period comparable sales in its food-led pubs and restaurants were down by about 3 per cent, although sales of drinks were down just 1 per cent against industry declines of about 2 per cent.

Whitbread's saving grace, however, is its spread of businesses and the strength of its brands. The likes of Marriott, Travel Inn, Costa and David Lloyd Leisure continue to prosper, and investment is increasingly being targeted at these faster growth areas.

The economic climate will probably get worse before it gets better but Whitbread looks well placed for when the good times roll again. Hold.



FI Group

IT IS not the most encouraging signal when the directors of a company sell. With uncomfortable frequency disposals of this sort have, with hindsight, proved to be ill-starred portents.

But director sales are not often accompanied by a 75 per cent rise in half-year profits. FI Group, the company in question here, is forecast to repeat the trick for the full-year.

Moreover, the profits growth is not about to disappear. FI generates 45 per cent of its earnings from long-term contracts that will deliver to come almost guaranteed for the next four years. As a computer software and personnel supplier, it is also in an industry with plenty of opportunity.

So why the frantic selling? If directors believe their company is hopelessly overvalued, they would be hard to contradict. FI shares trade at a staggering 64.6 times forecast earnings. FI is a good

company for sure, but is it really that good?

Like so many IT stocks, FI is supported by the "bigger fool" theory. This sees current purchasers admitting the foolishness of buying, but ever-confident that they will find bigger fools further down the line.

FI directors, it seems, are worried how many bigger fools there are. Follow their lead and take profits.

Wembley

MANY think Wembley is a stadium. Some think it is a public company. What it really is, though, is an enigma.

After all, the company has been trying to agree a deal to sell the stadium since April. Yet yesterday, when it did announce the deal, a move that should lead to a £100 million cash handout, the shares fell 22p to 351.4p.

There are two possible explanations. Perhaps the market agrees with the three non-

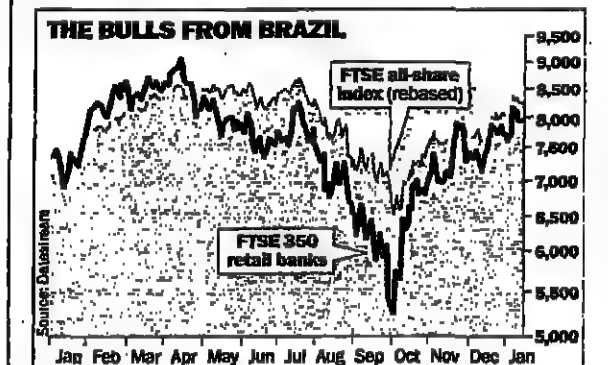
executive directors, who have opposed the stadium deal, and think that the sale of the ground to the Football Association for £103 million is not commercially sensible.

Or maybe the shares have fallen because the FA deal is likely to deter Eric, the football investment company, which is proposing to make a 418p a share bid (200p of which would be in cash). An Eric bid is now less likely, but it has not yet ruled itself out of the game.

Eric has about six weeks in which to decide what to do. It could still bid and scupper the deal, or bid and strike a deal with the FA to help fund the £200 million cost of rebuilding the stadium.

Given that shareholders are guaranteed a cash handout of at least 180p a share if the stadium is sold to the FA, it is hard to see less than 400p of value in Wembley one way or another. Hang on.

EDITED BY ROBERT COLE



BANKS bore the brunt of yesterday's sell-off as the Brazilian debt crisis continued to bubble away.

The worst losses were seen in Standard Chartered, down 84p, or 10 per cent, at 74.2p. NatWest 105p to £10.66, HSBC 125p to £16.28, Barclays 77p to £13.22, Lloyds TSB 43p to 82.1p and Royal Bank of Scotland 46p to £10.29p.

Investors are worried about the exposure of British banks to Brazil. They do not want a repeat of the bad debt crisis that sparked the

financial troubles in the late 1980s. But the banks have learnt their lesson and have only minimal exposure to the world's eighth largest economy.

Crédit Lyonnais, the broker, says yesterday was a knee-jerk reaction, although NatWest and Standard Chartered were looking "top heavy".

They say this was just the catalyst that sparked the sell-off, but warn the banks will not be immune to bad debts and increased competition at home.

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Western financial markets declared it was business as usual in October. Half the world might be diving into uncontrolled recession, but the hedge funds had been saved. The dual motors of the Nafta countries and euroland, which together account for well over half measured world output, were still growing at a respectable pace. Together, they could keep the world economy show on the road.

West of the Vistula and North of the tropics, asset prices have been booming. Even in Britain, there are still plenty of jobs of a sort.

In East Asia, epicentre of gloom, avuncular emissaries from the IMF, the World Bank et al have offered positive thinking. A meeting of central bank governors in Hong Kong this week brought reassurance that the worst is past and things are getting better.

No matter, perhaps, that most citizens in stricken lands would give the standard pantomime reply: "Oh no they're not." The fall in Malaysian industrial output appears to be accelerating but at least

Trade is weak link in global stability



GRAHAM SEALJEANT

the Indonesian rupiah has recovered to 30 per cent of its 1997 value, up from 14 per cent last summer. More of a dead cat bounce than the West's bungee boom.

Only on Tuesday, the US Treasury Secretary used a visit from the President of Argentina to offer the "total support of the global community" for policy in Brazil, the teetering dominion that was propped up at the end of the last wave of financial panic. This time, it was too late. So we are back to damage limitation, entreating China not to help its economy by devaluing too.

However confidence-sapping, Brazil's devaluation was predicted and widely recommended. It underlines how fragile the world economy still is. If Asia, Eastern Europe and South America are to keep their economic heads above water, they must rely on American consumers continuing to spend

not just all their income but a good slice of their capital gains as well. So Tuesday's threats of US trade sanctions were more ominous than the rumblings in Rio.

In Tokyo, Charlene Barshefsky, US Trade Representative, threatened Japan with "punitive sanctions" unless it quickly reversed a rise in steel exports to the US. Steel was just one facet of rapidly worsening trade relations.

In Geneva, US trade ambassador Rita Hayes pressed ahead with threats to levy punitive 100 per cent tariffs on about \$500 million worth of EU exports to America over the tangled banana dispute. America backs the heirs of United Fruit, inventor of the banana republic. The bizarre list of imports targeted, from cashmere sweaters to gilt chandeliers, no doubt answered lobby pleas.

Such disputes will multiply.

America is heading towards a \$300 billion trade deficit this year. Euroland and Japan should run up a combined \$200 billion surplus. Many US businesses will be hit by imports in the run-up to the 2000 presidential election campaign, ensuring that protection, or "fair trade" is high on the agenda. Both the US and the EU have lec-

tured Asia, including Japan, to rely on internal demand rather than export-led recovery. If anyone took the advice seriously, they would be condemning the region to a decade of depression.

America can still claim to be the champion of free trade, even if vulnerable sectors are rigidly protected. A key task of US Trade Representatives is therefore to shout imprecations against US trade partners through a media megaphone to calm populist calls to save American jobs from the foreigner.

In continental Europe, protectionism is more intellectually respectable. Adherence to free trade is often only pragmatic. As soon as the stricken countries exploit recovery in the euroland economy to boost their exports, they can expect even more hysterical cries of foul.

As British Steel knows only too well, trade in steel is more vulnera-

ble to exchange rates than trade in branded goods. Although Japan was supposedly flooding the US with steel last year, its steel output fell by 11 per cent, more than any other top producer. Ironically, Japan ceded second spot to America, where output dipped 1 per cent.

Russian output fell 10 per cent and Korea's by 8 per cent. By contrast, Brazil nearly maintained steel production and China, now the world leader, expanded by 6 per cent. Clearly, Brazil's devaluation will increase pressure on the US steel industry. Any devaluation by China would wreak havoc all over the shop.

As stress increases on American and European industries, the danger of a retreat from free trade will grow. It is already worse than at any time since the days of the over-strong Reagan dollar. Over the next couple of years we shall surely

see the open trading system come under greater strain than at any time since the protectionism that did so much harm in the 1930s was banished 50 years ago.

A trade war is most likely to happen by accident. US megaphone trade diplomacy is routine, aimed randomly at South Korea, Russia, India, Pakistan, Japan or Britain, which has been singled out for exemplary punishment in that other Gulf conflict over bananas. Smaller partners will no doubt surrender to the superpower's trade gunboat. But lurid threats do tend to spark real war, especially if the threat has to be backed up with action, as in 1914.

How easy it would then be, for instance, for the EU to raise the stakes in retaliation: how emotionally difficult not to. We should try to resist temptation. A trade war would finally plunge the global economy into depression, even if some would prosper for a while. America should be reminded, yet again, that what is said for consumption at home can have disastrous consequences abroad.

BTR investors aim to engineer a better deal from the chaos

Paul Durman reports from the disarray of an extraordinary shareholder meeting

It is just as well that BTR did not choose to hold its extraordinary general meeting in the Brewery, a popular venue in the City. That might have provoked an all-too-obvious jibe about its organisational skills.

Yesterday's gathering of BTR shareholders, which essentially marked the death knell for what was once Britain's seventh-largest company, descended into procedural chaos as private investors attempted to block the "disgraceful" merger with Siebe that they have been offered.

Bob Bauman, the engineering group's American chairman, was forced to reverse his initial ruling that an attempt to adjourn the meeting was out of order. This followed a hurried consultation, lasting several minutes, between David Stevens, BTR's general counsel and secretary, and lawyers from Slaughter & May. Mr Stevens had earlier been unable to provide his chairman with a breakdown of the proxy votes he was holding. He must have had an interesting conversation with Mr Bauman yesterday afternoon.

There then followed another delay while the company tried to find poll cards for the adjournment debate. Shareholders milled around, offering encouragement to Eddie Northcote, the retired management accountant who proposed the adjournment, and muttering about the ensuing shambles.

Like the vote on the £8.5 billion merger with Siebe, the poll on the adjournment was a foregone conclusion, because Mr Bauman was holding proxies equivalent to 98.9 per cent of the 58 per cent of shares voted. This, too, was a bone of contention — how could he use votes cast in support of the merger to back another, entirely different proposal? The meeting did not stagger to a close until almost four and a half hours after it began.

This final chapter was somehow in keeping with BTR's decline since the retirement in 1993 of Sir Owen Green, its driving force through three decades. The sprawling conglomerate with an obsession about improving profit mar-



Sir Owen Green was the driving force behind BTR for three decades and his departure marked the start of a decline

gins has found it difficult to learn new tricks in an era of low inflation.

Ian Strachan arrived as chief executive in April 1995 and tried to create a culture based on sales growth. He made billions of pounds of disposals to turn BTR into an allegedly focused engineering group. But neither this, nor the arrival of the well-regarded Mr Bauman, could bring an end to a succession of profit warnings and disappointing trading statements.

Long-term shareholders in

BTR — and many attended yesterday's meeting — had seen its share price slide from 400p to 95p in less than five years. They traded above 220p as recently as last May.

Yet Mr Bauman and his board struck their escape deal with Siebe on terms that value BTR's shares at a 14-year low. From Phillips & Drew downwards, few shareholders have much enthusiasm for the proposals to create a control systems colossus with Siebe — not least because Siebe has its own problems, losing the premium

rating that it enjoyed until last May. In the circumstances, BTR's board must have expected a rough ride. Mr Northcote had already, on Monday, unsuccessfully asked the High Court to force the adjournment of the meeting. The BTR shareholders who turned up to a deal that gives them only 45 per cent of the enlarged BTR Siebe, despite contributing about two thirds of the assets.

One small investor was greeted with applause when he said: "A board who recom-

mended this deal should be sacked — and especially the non-executive directors whose job it is to see that shareholder value is maintained."

A Mr Bowler queried how BTR could accept a valuation based on a share price trading at a ten-year low. Surely some bidder could have been found that would offer 140p, perhaps 160p, a share. "We've been skinned," he said.

Kenneth Riley, another small investor, was allowed time to expound a long analysis of the relative values of

BTR and Siebe based on sales, assets, gearing and other criteria. His conclusion was that BTR should be worth 2.3 times Siebe. "This is the directors acting against the interests of the shareholders," said Mr Riley.

Mr Bauman insisted that the board did consider other options to revive BTR. He said: "We have examined all the alternatives. We determined that a merger was the best course for the company."

"If anybody felt that they wanted to buy the company then it certainly has been possible for somebody to come through and do it. We think this is the best offer — and it's the only offer on the table." This, of course, has been the reluctant conclusion of the company's institutional shareholders.

Shareholders were also upset that they will raise out on a further £500 million that BTR was planning to hand back to them. And they complained about the £18 million of fees being paid to Goldman Sachs and Schroders, BTR's investment banking advisers.

Much of the venom was directed against the hapless Mr Strachan — though hapless is perhaps not the right word to describe a man who stands to collect more than £1.5 million in compensation if, as expected, he leaves BTR Siebe after overseeing the start of the integration.

One shareholder said the proposed level of compensation was "a ridiculous amount of money", adding: "The only reason for this merger is to remove him from his high office." Mr Strachan was told that "in all honour" he should cut down the amount of money he takes when he leaves. Mr Bauman defended Mr Strachan's deal-making but pointedly added that as deputy chairman of BTR Siebe "he's not in line command of operations."

Mr Northcote and other diehards have not yet given up hope. He said that he and "dozens" of other investors intend to petition the High Court on February 1 to persuade a judge to block the Siebe deal at the final hurdle.

Mr Northcote insists that the merger documents are misleading because Siebe's figures include £300 million of intangible assets — a value that would not be recognised under BTR's accounting conventions. He said this makes the merger an even worse deal for BTR's shareholders.

It looks a futile effort, but Mr Northcote has some "previous" in this area. In 1992 he successfully prevented Alan Sugar from taking Amstrad private at a knockdown price.

Free Internet service proves to be not such a giveaway

Many consumers were left open-mouthed last year when Dixons, the electrical retail chain, decided to offer unlimited access to the Internet — which usually costs between £10 to £16 a month from a company such as AOL or Demon — for free.

Yet the service, which Dixons yesterday said had attracted 900,000 accounts, is no giveaway. In some ways, it is a demonstration of how companies — with a little bit of lateral thinking — can use the Internet to their advantage. Yet it is also a demonstration of how a company can irritate its customers by promising much, and then delivering a rather disappointing service.

The strategy behind Freeserve is extremely clever. In most cases, you have to walk into a shop — either Dixons, Curry's, PC World or The Link — to get hold of the CD-Rom needed to boot up the service, creating valuable "footfall" for the company. Once inside a store, it is likely many customers (being tech-heads anyway) will splash out on a couple of hundred quid for a new gizmo.

The second catch comes when you load up the CD-Rom. After about half an hour of fiddling and switching on and off your computer, you find the left hand side of your Windows screen plastered with gaudy adverts for the Internet sites of organisations such as the Financial Times and the BBC. Apparently this is all part of Microsoft's latest version of Internet Explorer (the product that partly inspired the epic anti-trust trial against the software group in the US), and is there to make it easier for Internet users to visit their "favourite" sites.

Dixons, quite fairly, argues that it has nothing to do with this software, and would not be allowed to change it even if it wanted to. It is also possible, Dixons says, to get rid of the various plugs with a little bit of tweaking. It looks, however, a lot like a clever way of putting advertising directly onto your desktop, even if this is a Microsoft, rather than Dixons, ploy. This gets around the enormous problem facing advertisers of trying to reach a mass-market on the Internet, where there are literally trillions of sites.

The third catch comes when you try to log on to Freeserve. Before you are allowed to do anything you have to fill in a detailed form telling Dixons nearly every personal detail about yourself, from your salary and your personal interests



to where you live. If you are willing to give that information away, you can then use the Freeserve service.

However, when I tried using it at home, it was painfully slow, and the modern occasionally lost its connection to the Freeserve server. All in all, I began to realise why I had been paying a kinner a month for a normal Internet service. Dixons, however, claims that this is exceptional, and that recent tests have shown it to be one of the faster services available in Britain. "The Internet often has very slow days," says a Freeserve official. "You have to be careful who you ascribe that to."

Time will ultimately tell whether Freeserve's customers think it gives a good service, although many are likely to keep their account while using a paid-for service at the same time. The aim of Dixons is to sell advertising on Freeserve, and integrate shopping sites into the service, so they can take a fee every time a transaction takes place.

So far, Dixons appears to be the only British retailer to have demonstrated such an understanding of how it can use the Internet to its advantage. Yet many users will be left with the impression that Freeserve needs to improve the quality of its service, and be a bit more upfront with consumers about what they are giving to Dixons, and what they are getting for free.

IBM, the computer group, won the most patents in the US for the sixth consecutive year in 1998, beating its previous record by a massive 40 per cent, according to a survey out this week.

INVESTORS facing large tax bills are being urged to put money into a new British film, *Paradise Grove*, starring Warren Mitchell, who became famous playing Alf Garnett in *Till Death Do Us Part*. The producers say they will publish a fundraising prospectus next week that takes advantage of tax concessions.

CHRIS AYRES

Junk e-mail

THERE is an e-mail doing the rounds of the City concerning the Walt Disney Company and a new product called Beta E-mail Tracking developed by Disney and Microsoft. The message explains



"This country should have a recession more often"

that as part of the tests for the system, 13,000 people must receive it, so pass it on to 15 other people. There is a prize, cash and/or trips to Disneyland, offered at the end of the process. The e-mail has, in just a couple of days, made the rounds of Barclays Capital, Cazenove and any number of other firms. You will be seeing it soon.

Amazing how credulous people can be. It is a complete fake, of course. "I've been asked to tell anyone who phones about it that it's not from us," says a lady in corporate affairs.

Who would think up such a pointless spoof? "It's designed to clog up the e-mail system," says someone who knows about these things.

A TRIO of QCs are conducting a seminar on February 1 titled "Capital Tax Planning after Lady Ingram". This was the recent landmark case having to do with inheri-

ance tax and how to avoid this after your death. The seminar, appropriately if coincidentally, is at the Royal College of Pathologists.

French leave

AS I predicted last week, Jean Lemierre, a French Treasury civil servant, has been enthroned as chairman of the powerful Economic and Finance Committee, successor to the Monetary Committee, which was chaired by our own Treasury man, Sir Nigel Wicks.

His departure has led to an unusual and fulsome tribute in the French press. *La Tribune* told its readers that he had gone because of Britain's non-involvement in the euro. So the Englishman had done the decent thing, much about the British sense of fair play, etc. etc. and stood aside.

Heart-warming, but not, alas, true. Wicks had to stand down because of the Monetary Committee has ceased to exist and he is due to retire in 18 months, and the term is for two years. Still, it gave the French the chance to be nice about us for a change.



I HEAR the normally hardheaded computer firm EDS is considering giving a large sum to charity in Kingston upon Thames to compensate those who received housing benefit late after EDS took over some services for the local council. In fact, says the excellent industry paper, *Computer Weekly*, a five-figure sum has been agreed. EDS admits to problems with the re-

new and benefits services last year and is indeed considering such a "gesture", says a spokesman. He seems thoroughly annoyed that the news has come out.

I get the impression his petulance might be because the company would like to have announced the kind "donation" itself. With the proper spin, of course.

Net growth

STANDING room only at the Dixons analysts meeting yesterday, with more than a hundred on hand. A number of the analysts were strangely unfamiliar to the company.

The reason became obvious when the questions started. They were part of the strange tribe who cover only Internet stocks, because Dixons, as you will read elsewhere, is Britain's premier Internet stock.

Retail-watchers wanting to know about gross margins were swamped by techies asking about "third generation appliances". Everyone eventually decided that Dixons was a raging buy, though they were a bit hazy on precisely why.

BARELY days into the job, and the new Minister for Small Businesses is firmly on-message. Michael Wills appeared at his first public engagement yesterday, at the Institute of Directors.

His subject, unpromisingly, was information technology and how companies can be made or encouraged to comply to beat the dreaded bug. Which he managed to transform into a sermon on the Third Way: there are three ways, he said, the first compulsion, the second chaos, and the third partnership. The boy will go far.

Milken names

THE Milken Institute, chairman Michael Milken of junk bonds fame, is inviting registrations for a March conference on the global economy. The cast list includes five economics Nobel Prize winners.

It does not include Albert Gore, US Vice-President, Helmut Kohl, Robert Rubin, the Treasury Secretary, and two other senior US politicians. Nor even the ever-popular

Mikhail Gorbachev. They are "invited but not confirmed".

I cannot speak for their availability, though I wonder about Gorbachev, who doesn't get out much. But I notice there was no invite for Clinton. Perhaps they don't think he'll be around by then.

MARTIN WALLER
martin.waller@the-times.co.uk



Milken: host of illustrious names not yet signed up for conference

LIG sells product rights

London. International Group (LIG), the makers of condoms and other healthcare products, has agreed to sell the product rights and operating assets of a range of its non-core health and beauty products, sold largely under the Ico brand name in Southern Europe, to Novio for about £4.3 million in cash.

The company said the disposal would allow it to focus on its Durex condom brand in Italy and Spain. LIG will retain the Sauber and Mister Baby health and beauty brands.

The disposal is anticipated to be earnings-neutral in 1999-2000 and positive thereafter.

Tullow lifts stake
Tullow Oil, the exploration group based in the Republic of Ireland, has entered into an arrangement with Perenco Investments and Edinburgh Oil & Gas that will result in Tullow increasing its interest in the North Yorkshire gasfields from 13 per cent to 60 per cent. The deal, subject to approval by the Department of Trade and Industry, will see Tullow assume responsibility for the operation of the Knapton power station.

Vega confident
Vega Group, the IT services company, said that an excellent order intake had boosted its results and strong demand meant that it was looking for a significant improvement in full-year profits. For the six months to October 31, pre-tax profit was up 71 per cent at £1.43 million on turnover 24 per cent higher at £12.9 million. Earnings per share were 6.10p (5.29p) and the interim dividend is 2.13p (1.91p). The company said that at the end of October its forward order book was £30 million.

Henry N. Lewis
Henry N. Lewis, chairman of Action Computer Supplies, has not sold £202,000 of Electronics Boutique shares as reported on Tuesday. The transaction was carried out by a separate Henry N. Lewis, a non-executive director of Electronics Boutique unrelated to the ACS chairman.

OFT orders banks to step up efforts to cater for the poor

By GAVIN LUMSDEN

JOHN BRIDGEMAN, Director-General of Fair Trading, yesterday warned banks and building societies that they could face regulation by the Financial Services Authority if they do not increase their efforts to serve the poorest in society.

Presenting the Office of Fair Trading's report, *Vulnerable Consumers and Financial Services*, Mr Bridgeman said that one in ten households did not have a current account, effectively depriving them of access to basic financial services.

Research by the OFT suggests just under a quarter of people who applied for a current account in the past year had been rejected by banks after failing their credit checks. Such people were unable to arrange home insurance and incurred higher gas and electricity bills through having to use pre-payment meters.

Barred from gaining credit from conventional sources, consumers without current accounts were far more likely to fall into the hands of loan sharks. Saving was almost impossible, the report said. Mr

Bridgeman urged banks, retailers and the Post Office to take advantage of new technology and offer the poor access to basic, low-cost current accounts that would not let them go overdraw.

Mr Bridgeman dismissed the notion that people chose not to take up basic financial services. Rather, he said, the current business and regulatory system was excluding them. "People are being left behind in an expanding market where the choice is between a range of complex and highly regulated products primarily aimed

at relatively well-off and low-risk consumers." Credit unions and a new generation of cheap flexible products should be developed. Individual savings accounts — which replace Peps and Tesas in April — were not the final answer.

Insisting that poor customers represented an untapped business opportunity for the financial services industry, Mr Bridgeman issued his warning: "It is not inconceivable that if we don't see a social response from financial institutions then a regulatory response might be needed."

Dutch bid £80m for Dudley Jenkins

By MATTHEW BARBOUR

WEGENER, the Dutch publisher and printer, yesterday emerged as the mystery suitor for Dudley Jenkins, the direct mail supplies group.

Dudley Jenkins has agreed to a cash offer from the Dutch company of £80m per share, valuing the company at £80.6 million.

The offer represents a premium of about 18 per cent to the closing price of 492p on January 11, the day before the company announced it was in possible takeover talks. Wegener has received undertakings from shareholders who speak for 54 per cent of Dudley Jenkins shares to accept the offer.

Wegener's direct marketing division has a yearly turnover of about £100 million and a market capital of £370 million. Dudley Jenkins has a yearly turnover of about £26 million.

Tyler Banchell, chairman at Dudley Jenkins, said the move would give it access to new European markets.

Wegener, whose operations include regional newspapers, radio and television, said the acquisition fits with its aim of building its position in the European direct marketing sector.

Yesterday Dudley Jenkins posted first-half pre-tax profits up 40 per cent to £2.3 million on sales of £13.4 million. Earnings were 11.53p a share (8.12p) and the interim dividend is 2.9p (2.0p). The shares rose 16p to 576p.

Bleak year ahead for North Sea oil

THE North Sea oil industry faces a bleak year, with the low crude prices that led to massive mergers and lay-offs in 1998 battering exploration and production plans, spelling doom for thousands of workers. Wood Mackenzie, the consultants based in Edinburgh, said that the amount of investment required for the new projects approved for Britain's part of the North Sea in 1998 fell by more than \$4 billion (£2.45 billion) compared with the previous year — nearly two thirds. Exploration drilling activity also fell by 35 per cent last year to 53 wells spudded, down from 89 the year before. This year has got off to an even slower start, with Arthur Andersen, the consultants, saying that in the first week there was no drilling activity offshore northwest Europe.

North Sea Brent blend was priced at just above \$11 a barrel yesterday after averaging \$13.30 last year and no one forecasts a recovery any time soon to the \$20 levels of 1996 and 1997. The oil industry provides about 394,000 jobs in the UK and accounted for about 20 per cent of industrial investment over the past ten years.

Miller Freeman boost

UNITED News & Media yesterday announced three acquisitions for Miller Freeman, its business information group. The company has bought Vercom, a US publisher and trade show organiser; Fernatec, an Argentine trade show group; and Stammer, an Italian business-to-business magazine publisher. The value of the acquisitions was not disclosed, but United said it brings its investment in Miller Freeman to £40 million in recent months. Tony Tillin, chief executive of Miller Freeman, said: "These investments are steps towards our goal of becoming the prime source of business information worldwide."

HCC to buy Pepys

HCC Insurance Holdings, the New York-listed insurance group, yesterday announced that it has signed a letter of intent to buy Pepys, the parent company of Ratner Mackenzie, the Lloyd's of London insurance broker. Terms of the deal were not disclosed but the agreement involves a combination of cash and HCC shares. It is expected to be closed by the end of January. Ratner was formed in 1989 and operates primarily as a reinsurer in the accident and health markets. Its clients include many Lloyd's underwriters and insurance companies, particularly in the US and Europe.

Oasis picks chairman

OASIS HEALTHCARE, the Ofex-listed company that operates dental practices, has appointed Ron Trenter as chairman. Mr Trenter, 54, has been acting as a consultant to the company for a number of months, and fills the post that has been vacant since May last year. The group has also appointed Joe King, who has a background in pharmacy, as deputy chairman. Oasis also announced that it plans to raise up to £1.2 million by the placing of up to 12.5 million shares. The money will be used for acquisitions, in line with the group's ambition to expand its number of dental practices to 100.

RM wins PFI contract

RM, a supplier of IT services to the education sector, yesterday announced a £43 million contract under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) to manage the IT requirements of schools in the Dudley local education authority. The company said that it was the largest and most ambitious project of its kind, servicing some 105 schools in the area over a ten-year period. Richard Gilling, chief executive, said that the contract "is further evidence of the company's success in broadening its core capabilities. We look forward to continued growth in this area over the forthcoming year."

Morgan Crucible issues warning

By ADAM JONES

SHARES of Morgan Crucible, the engineer, plummeted yesterday after it gave warning of a "swift and savage" downturn in its markets.

The group, which makes carbon and ceramic parts used by industry, said 1998 profits before tax would be 15 to 20 per cent lower than in 1997, when it made £108.3 million. The shares had fallen from 262p to 183p by early afternoon.

The main reason for the profits shortfall is the flood of cheap steel imports into the US from Japan, South Korea and South America. The pressure this put on US steel producers meant they delayed refurbishment programmes that would have required Morgan Crucible products.

Shares of Cookson were also marked down after Morgan highlighted the US steel problem, which Cookson also supplies. Its shares fell from 134p to 122p.

Morgan was also affected by over-ordering at Boeing, the US aircraft maker. Morgan supplies \$20,000 (£12,000) of parts on every 747. There was also destocking and deferral of orders in the semiconductor industry. Demand after the strike at General Motors in the US was slow and the electrical carbon division was also hit by a site reorganisation.

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On the ball: Karen Brady said the club's plan to offer financial services was a 'natural step'

Blues to offer mortgages

BIRMINGHAM CITY, the AIM-listed football club known by its fans as the Blues, plans to launch a financial services arm that will offer support a wide range of products, including individual savings accounts and mortgages (Manus Costello writes).

Karen Brady, the club's managing director, said: "It is

a natural step. Supporters trust their club and trust is important if you are borrowing or investing money." She declined to reveal the partner with whom the joint venture will be undertaken, but said it was "one of the country's leading financial services company".

Birmingham's drive for promotion led to the signing of a

number of players, which hit the annual results, announced yesterday. The net cost of transfers was £5.2 million, causing the club to post a pre-tax loss of £3.7 million for the year to August 31, down from last year's £1.1 million profit. The loss per share was 7.25p, against earnings of 2.52p, and again no dividend was offered.

The high cost of compliance

Meeting PAYE regulations is putting an unfair burden on employers, says Leslie Ferrar

LAST year much press interest was generated by an Inland Revenue-sponsored report that illustrated the cost to employers of compliance with PAYE regulations. The report by Bath University academics revealed that the costs to business for 1995-96 were more than £1 billion, with smaller businesses being hardest hit because they were unable to enjoy either economies of scale or the cashflow advantage of docking the pay of employees before paying the money to the Revenue.

The Government welcomed the report and cannot be accused of ignoring the impact of tax compliance burdens on employers. In his pre-Budget statement in November, the Chancellor promised the extension of existing Revenue/Contributions Agency help-lines to include VAT, which would give a one-stop tax advice shop. The merger of the Revenue and CA next year will also help, though a much greater move — the alignment of tax and national insurance — is still apparently taboo.

But even in the relatively short time since the 1995-96 tax year, PAYE compliance burdens employers face have increased and will do so even more in future. This year alone has seen several

burdensome obligations placed on their shoulders.

The Teaching and Higher Education Bill may not have been obvious required reading for employers, so the provisions dealing with student loans may come as a surprise. The set-up costs of allowing student loans taken out after last August to be calculated and then repaid via the PAYE system are estimated to be anything up to £90 million, while clauses giving young people statutory paid time off for study or training should account for £10 million. This takes practical effect from April 6, 2000.

At the same time, employers will have to pay the new working families tax credit and disabled person's tax credit, which has already been the subject of protest from smaller businesses, which fear they would have to pay more in credit than they owed in tax, leaving them needing cash advances to stay in business.

The record-keeping needed to administer the proposed national minimum wage also threatens to be costly and extensive. The rules will apply to far more employees than had been expected — records will have to be kept and calculations performed for any staff earning less than



Leslie Ferrar says PAYE requirements will increase

£1,000 per month, with no pro-rata rules for part-time workers. This comes at a time when many companies are struggling to assess the impact of the Working Time Regulations, which came into force on October 1. Once again, the calculation of opt-outs, rest breaks, holiday en-

titement and the like represent further administrative burdens. With all these additional costs since 1995-96, the Bath report's assessment that compliance costs for small companies had effectively doubled since 1981-82 may already be an underestimate. But why have costs risen?

It would seem that for all the investment by businesses they have been running to stand still on PAYE compliance, which has got more complex and expensive as more responsibilities have been transferred from tax authority to taxpayer.

And not only on PAYE issues, which affect mostly the small to medium-sized sector. Big corporates have got to cope with the corporate tax self-assessment system, which will put the whole issue of tax compliance much higher up the corporate agenda.

After all, since the last review, there have been developments that should have reduced costs: multiple tax rates have been reduced; fewer coding adjustments and many employees are now paid monthly, not weekly.

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And not only on PAYE issues, which affect mostly the small to medium-sized sector. Big corporates have got to cope with the corporate tax self-assessment system, which will put the whole issue of tax compliance much higher up the corporate agenda.

Companies that have opted for the new quarterly payments system will have to pay five years' tax in the next four, and work out how to assess whole-year profits months in advance. And there are penalties for getting it wrong and greater powers of inquiry for the Revenue.

The Bath report suggested switching some compliance burdens from employers to employees. But with self-assessment, individuals have probably got enough to cope with. Employers' new year resolutions must simply be to get systems and procedures in good order.

Leslie Ferrar is a tax partner in KPMG's Human Resources Solutions Group

Age-old problem of taxing the over-65s

LAST YEAR John Andrews retired from what was, at that point, Coopers & Lybrand. He had been head of tax. He was immediate past president of the Chartered Institute of Taxation (CIOT). His thoughts turned to the years ahead. It is remarkable how retirement concentrates the mind. Now he has popped up again as head of the CIOT's Low Income Tax Reform Group with a report titled *Older People on Low Incomes — the Case for a Friendlier Tax System*.

Now no one is suggesting that retired partners from the Big Five accounting firms are remotely close to the classification of "low incomes". But the mind obviously starts to think a bit about the plight of those already in the years ahead. And once it does, then several tax issues become remarkably clear. The first and most basic is triggered by the realisation that the Inland Revenue, under severe pressure and with its resource in steady decline, is wasting a huge amount of time, work and forms in trying to keep in touch with the tiny tax affairs of millions of bewildered pensioners. The second is that, if this is deemed, for whatever peculiar political motivation, to be necessary, then these people need much more help than they are currently getting. As the report says: "The number of older taxpayers as a proportion of the total population is set to rise into the new millennium at a time when the resources of the Inland Revenue are set to decline and where older people, as a group, may not be viewed as a priority when assessing customer service needs."

And the Revenue in any case is cutting back its resources and switching much more to a process-based service. "The lengthy and sometimes labyrinthine nature of sorting out an elderly person's tax affairs will shortly be impossible to provide. For example, as the report says, "plans announced by the Inland Revenue in 1992 to provide every taxpayer with a single point of contact in dealing with their tax affairs have quickly been shelved."

But in any case there is little point in the Revenue pointing any of its precious resource at pensioners. The Revenue is increasingly aimed at putting resource where it can maximise growth in tax revenue.

not received. Pensioners, by and large, have very little money and owe still less tax on it. From a business point of view, it makes no sense to collect it except through a very simple system.

As Andrews sees it: "They spend an awful amount of time with a lot of people for not very much tax. People over the age of 65 do sit down to a relatively predictable income." So why not keep the tax-gathering process to an equally simple regime?

The report suggests a tax-exemption certificate as the main tool. These would be available to people over the age of 65 whose income was below a specific figure and was not expected to rise above it in the future. That would cover the vast majority of elderly people in this country.

But the important point is that anyone holding such a certificate "would be exempted from having any contact with the tax authorities or the tax system". Those words alone would bring a collective sigh of relief to the elderly of the country. They would receive all income gross with a minimum of form-filling and they would not be required to fill in tax returns or deal with the Revenue. You could envisage "Freedom from the Taxman" parties becoming as much of a rite of passage as 18th and 21st birthdays are to the young.

The second major suggestion in the report is that we follow the example of America and Canada in establishing some form of volunteering system whereby the equivalent of barefoot doctors provide advice to elderly taxpayers. The report suggests an experiment in such tax volunteers.

In America they are normally retired people themselves, who undergo training by the tax authorities and can then help particular groups of low-income taxpayers to sort out their affairs.

But, in the end, the issue is not one of simple help for people who need it. It is not some sort of "soft" charity-based decision. It should be a hard-nosed business decision for the Inland Revenue.

"It's not going to cost an arm and a leg," said Andrews, and, as the report makes clear, "There would be significant administrative benefits to the Inland Revenue. It has long acknowledged that it is not cost-effective to pursue individuals for small amounts of tax."



ROBERT BRUCE

Ex-president's retirement task

THE Chartered Institute of Taxation is chuffed that so many people have taken kindly to its report on pensioners' tax problems, produced by its recently retired past president, John Andrews. Its council meeting this week learnt that much coverage is expected in the many magazines for retired people. Action was suggested to get hold of copies of these articles. Just before a working party was set up to do so, someone came up with the

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obvious solution. As Andrews was now retired, presumably he already subscribed to them. Could he look out for coverage? Andrews smiled, but in a very fixed sort of a way.

Plotting a way up
IT IS conspiracy time, again, at Moorgate Place. Now is the time when council members scramble around to pick up signatures of support in an effort to get a foot on the rickety ladder to the presidency. Ever

hopeful is Michael Groom, whose image has been improved by his work chairing council meetings. But cheeky chap David Hunt, of Parnell Kerr Forster, has flung his hat into the ring. Quite how his line in alternative humour will go down in ministerial meetings is hard to judge. The tax duo of Peter Wynan, still immersed in PricewaterhouseCoopers post-merger machinations, and Anita Monteith, the tax faculty chairman, are ex-

pected to wait for another time. The tough triumvirate now in power is seen as a hard act to follow. One council member said: "We don't want a wet nelly following on." Successful candidates will be announced next week.

Count them out
THE Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (the ACCA) has found some more people to upset. The Association of Accounting Technicians

(AAT), the pan-profession body training second-tier accountants, which the ACCA abandoned in order to set up its own competing organisation, has been very successful in negotiating exemptions recently. All other accounting bodies have been giving AAT members more exemptions or greater recognition if they attempt the senior bodies' exams. Except for the perpetual odd man out, the ACCA. It has withdrawn some exemptions, though not for its own second-tier body. Nothing changes.

ROBERT BRUCE

Handwritten notes and signatures in Arabic script at the bottom right of the page.

Equities tumble as gilts advance

TRADING PERIOD: Settlement takes place five business days after the day of trade. Changes are calculated on the previous day's close, but adjustments are made when a stock is ex-dividend. Changes, yields and price/earnings ratios are based on middle prices.

High	Low	Company	Price	Change	%	P/E
ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES						
12.50	12.40	100% Pure Vodka	12.45	+0.05	+0.4	12.5
12.40	12.30	100% Pure Vodka	12.35	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
12.30	12.20	100% Pure Vodka	12.25	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
12.20	12.10	100% Pure Vodka	12.15	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
12.10	12.00	100% Pure Vodka	12.05	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
12.00	11.90	100% Pure Vodka	11.95	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
11.90	11.80	100% Pure Vodka	11.85	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
11.80	11.70	100% Pure Vodka	11.75	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
11.70	11.60	100% Pure Vodka	11.65	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
11.60	11.50	100% Pure Vodka	11.55	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
11.50	11.40	100% Pure Vodka	11.45	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
11.40	11.30	100% Pure Vodka	11.35	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
11.30	11.20	100% Pure Vodka	11.25	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
11.20	11.10	100% Pure Vodka	11.15	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
11.10	11.00	100% Pure Vodka	11.05	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
11.00	10.90	100% Pure Vodka	10.95	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
10.90	10.80	100% Pure Vodka	10.85	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
10.80	10.70	100% Pure Vodka	10.75	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
10.70	10.60	100% Pure Vodka	10.65	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
10.60	10.50	100% Pure Vodka	10.55	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
10.50	10.40	100% Pure Vodka	10.45	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
10.40	10.30	100% Pure Vodka	10.35	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
10.30	10.20	100% Pure Vodka	10.25	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
10.20	10.10	100% Pure Vodka	10.15	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
10.10	10.00	100% Pure Vodka	10.05	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
10.00	9.90	100% Pure Vodka	9.95	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
9.90	9.80	100% Pure Vodka	9.85	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
9.80	9.70	100% Pure Vodka	9.75	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
9.70	9.60	100% Pure Vodka	9.65	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
9.60	9.50	100% Pure Vodka	9.55	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
9.50	9.40	100% Pure Vodka	9.45	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
9.40	9.30	100% Pure Vodka	9.35	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
9.30	9.20	100% Pure Vodka	9.25	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
9.20	9.10	100% Pure Vodka	9.15	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
9.10	9.00	100% Pure Vodka	9.05	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
9.00	8.90	100% Pure Vodka	8.95	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
8.90	8.80	100% Pure Vodka	8.85	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
8.80	8.70	100% Pure Vodka	8.75	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
8.70	8.60	100% Pure Vodka	8.65	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
8.60	8.50	100% Pure Vodka	8.55	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
8.50	8.40	100% Pure Vodka	8.45	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
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8.10	8.00	100% Pure Vodka	8.05	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
8.00	7.90	100% Pure Vodka	7.95	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
7.90	7.80	100% Pure Vodka	7.85	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
7.80	7.70	100% Pure Vodka	7.75	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
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7.40	7.30	100% Pure Vodka	7.35	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
7.30	7.20	100% Pure Vodka	7.25	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
7.20	7.10	100% Pure Vodka	7.15	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
7.10	7.00	100% Pure Vodka	7.05	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
7.00	6.90	100% Pure Vodka	6.95	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
6.90	6.80	100% Pure Vodka	6.85	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
6.80	6.70	100% Pure Vodka	6.75	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
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5.10	5.00	100% Pure Vodka	5.05	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
5.00	4.90	100% Pure Vodka	4.95	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
4.90	4.80	100% Pure Vodka	4.85	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
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2.40	2.30	100% Pure Vodka	2.35	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
2.30	2.20	100% Pure Vodka	2.25	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
2.20	2.10	100% Pure Vodka	2.15	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
2.10	2.00	100% Pure Vodka	2.05	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
2.00	1.90	100% Pure Vodka	1.95	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
1.90	1.80	100% Pure Vodka	1.85	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
1.80	1.70	100% Pure Vodka	1.75	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
1.70	1.60	100% Pure Vodka	1.65	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
1.60	1.50	100% Pure Vodka	1.55	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
1.50	1.40	100% Pure Vodka	1.45	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
1.40	1.30	100% Pure Vodka	1.35	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
1.30	1.20	100% Pure Vodka	1.25	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
1.20	1.10	100% Pure Vodka	1.15	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
1.10	1.00	100% Pure Vodka	1.05	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
1.00	0.90	100% Pure Vodka	0.95	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
0.90	0.80	100% Pure Vodka	0.85	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
0.80	0.70	100% Pure Vodka	0.75	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
0.70	0.60	100% Pure Vodka	0.65	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
0.60	0.50	100% Pure Vodka	0.55	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
0.50	0.40	100% Pure Vodka	0.45	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
0.40	0.30	100% Pure Vodka	0.35	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
0.30	0.20	100% Pure Vodka	0.25	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
0.20	0.10	100% Pure Vodka	0.15	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
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-0.90	-1.00	100% Pure Vodka	-0.95	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
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-2.80	-2.90	100% Pure Vodka	-2.85	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
-2.90	-3.00	100% Pure Vodka	-2.95	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
-3.00	-3.10	100% Pure Vodka	-3.05	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
-3.10	-3.20	100% Pure Vodka	-3.15	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
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-3.90	-4.00	100% Pure Vodka	-3.95	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
-4.00	-4.10	100% Pure Vodka	-4.05	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
-4.10	-4.20	100% Pure Vodka	-4.15	-0.05	-0.4	12.5
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Chancery Division

Law Report January 14 1999

Chancery Division

Fixing date of voluntary liquidation

In re Continental Assurance Company of London plc (in liquidation)

Before Mr Justice Carnwath
[Judgment December 18]
The Insurance Companies (Winding Up) Rules (SI 1985 No 95 (L2)) were designed to be a comprehensive code and applicable to all liquidations whether compulsory or voluntary.

In order to avoid an otherwise inevitable anomaly, it was necessary, in the case of a voluntary liquidation, to read the reference to the date of the winding up order, in those paragraphs which referred specifically to a winding up order, as a reference to the resolution which constituted the commencement of the winding up under the Insolvency Act 1986 and the point at which the company went into liquidation.

Mr Justice Carnwath so held in a reserved judgment in the Chancery Division when giving directions under section 112 of the 1986 Act relating to the winding up of Continental Assurance Company of London plc.

The two joint liquidators, Christopher John Hughes and David Julian Buchler were, respectively, applicant and respondent for the purposes of determining whether claims under eight priority insurance policies and one promotional contingency insurance policy were to be valued on a "just estimate of value" or a "return of premium" basis under the 1985 Rules.

Rule 6 of the 1985 Rules provides: "Except in relation to amounts which have fallen due for payment before the date of the

winding up order, the holder of a general business policy shall be admitted as a creditor in relation to his policy without proof for an amount equal to the value of the policy and for this purpose the value of a policy shall be determined in accordance with Schedule 1."

Paragraph 2 of Schedule 1 provides: "(1) This paragraph applies in relation to liabilities under a general business policy not dealt with by paragraph 1.

"(2) The value to be attributed to those liabilities shall be (i) if the policy is expressed to run from a definite date to another... such proportion of the last premium paid as is proportionate to the unexpired portion of the period in relation to which the premium was paid; and (ii) in any other case, be a just estimate of that value."

Miss Elizabeth Gloster, QC and Mr Stephen Atherton for the applicant; Mr Gabriel Moss, QC and Miss Felicity Toubie for the respondent.

MR JUSTICE CARNWATH said that the prize indemnity policy concerned was designed to protect the football clubs against the additional expense that might be incurred in the event of success.

The joint liquidators had valued and admitted claims under the nine contracts on the basis of a "just estimate of value" pursuant to paragraph 2(2)(a) of Schedule 1 to the 1985 Rules.

That basis of valuation was challenged by the company's insurers. They contended that they should be valued on a "return of premium" basis, under paragraph 2(2)(a). That would, as his Lordship understood it, result in no liability falling on the insurers since they were responsible for liabilities relating to claims, not for returns of premium.

There were two principal issues: (i) Did the 1985 Rules apply at all to the liquidation? (ii) If so, did paragraph 2(2)(a) apply?

His Lordship summarised the development of the legislation from the Life Assurance Act 1872 to the Insurance Companies Act 1982 and referred to the *Police Protection Board* [1992] 2 Lloyd's Rep 358.

The 1985 Rules were made under section 39 of the Insurance Companies Act 1982 subsection (1) of which provided:

"Rules may be made under section 41 of the 1986 Act for determining the amount of the liabilities of an insurance company to policy holders of any class or description for the purposes of proof in a winding up."

Rule 6, which was directly in issue in the present case, was headed "Valuation of general business policies."

Miss Gloster's submission that the rules did not apply rested on two alternative arguments: first, that the rules only applied to com-

panies carrying on long-term business, either alone or in conjunction with general business, and had no application to companies carrying on solely general business; second, that they applied only to compulsory liquidations, and not to a voluntary liquidation as here.

The second point had more substance, since there was an apparent anomaly in the drafting. Prima facie, one would expect the code to apply to all forms of winding up, compulsory or voluntary.

In all previous legislation dating back to the 1872 Act, it was stated specifically that the code was intended to apply where the company was being "wound up by the court, or subject to the supervision of the court, or voluntarily."

Section 59 of the 1982 Act did not refer expressly to voluntary winding up.

It referred generally to "proof in a winding up." The natural reading would be that it applied to any form of winding up, compulsory or voluntary.

That view was reinforced by the fact that the rules were to be made under section 41 of the 1986 Act, which applied to all types of winding up.

Turning to the 1985 Rules, however, there were indications that they were designed to deal with winding up following an order of the court, rather than voluntary winding up.

The rules could not be made to apply effectively to voluntary liquidations, unless some additional words were read into those paragraphs which referred specifically to a winding up order.

Mr Moss suggested that the reference to the date of the winding up order should, in the case of a voluntary liquidation, be read as a reference to the resolution which constituted the commencement of the winding up under the 1986 Act (see sections 84 and 86) and the point at which the company "goes into liquidation" (see section 247(2)).

In his Lordship's view, this was an occasion where it was permissible to add words to the statute to avoid what would otherwise be an inexplicable anomaly.

All the previous legislation dealing with voluntary and compulsory liquidations. There appeared to be no sensible reason for excluding voluntary liquidations from a scheme which, as Mr Justice Hoffmann had observed in *Transit*, was designed to be exhaustive.

The rule-making power in the statute envisaged rules applicable to winding up generally. In the absence of any other indication, the natural assumption would be that the rules would cover the same ground. Mr Moss's suggested addition was a natural one, and was supported by the scheme of the 1985 Act. His Lordship adopted his proposal.

His Lordship concluded that the 1985 Rules applied to each of the nine contracts. In the eight football cases the applicable provision was paragraph 2(2)(b) requiring a "just estimate" taking account of hindsight. In the promotional contingency policy case, paragraph 2(2)(a) applied and the value fell to be assessed on a "return of premium" basis.

Solicitors: D. J. Freeman; Chyde & Co.

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Pension scheme trustee are favoured creditors

In re Thirty-Eight Building Ltd

Before Miss Heather Williamson, QC
[Judgment December 3]

For the purposes of determining whether a declaration of trust by a company in favour of its employees' pension scheme was a preference within the meaning of section 239 of the Insolvency Act 1986, the so-called creditors in whose favour the alleged preference was granted were the trustees of the pension scheme collectively.

While a trustee was usually considered as a person connected with the company, where the terms of the trust conferred a power that could be exercised for the benefit of the company or an associate of the company, such as a director or shadow director of the company, or a close relative by blood or marriage of the same, section 435(b) of the 1986 Act disqualified that rule in the case of a pension scheme, even in the case of a small pension scheme whose beneficiaries consist solely of persons who were connected with the company.

Miss Heather Williamson, QC, sitting as a deputy judge in the Chancery Division, so held in a reserved judgment delivered on the respondents' summons under Order 14A of the Rules of the Supreme Court that the respondent trustees of the Saunders Retirement Benefit Scheme: Edwin Arthur Saunders, Janet Marion Saunders, Nicholas James Alexander Saunders, Simon Edwin Saunders and the Berkeley Burke Trust Co Ltd, were not "persons connected with the company" within the meaning of section 240(1)(a) of the 1986 Act.

The plaintiffs, Frank Arthur Sims and Barry David Lewis, the liquidators of Thirty-Eight Building Ltd, sought a declaration that the company's declaration of trust dated March 31, 1995 in favour of the first four respondents was void as a preference pursuant to section 239 of the 1986 Act.

Mr Adam Goodison for the liquidators; Mr John Randall, QC and Mr Peter Starovic for the respondents.

By a declaration of trust made on March 31, 1995 the company went into creditors' voluntary liquidation. The statement of affairs showed assets of £400 and liabilities of £3,993,951, the bulk of which was described as a loan of £2,943,104 from its subsidiary.

For the declaration of trust to be avoided as a preference, it had to be proved that it was made "at a relevant time." By section 240(1) of the 1986 Act the "relevant time" meant within six months of the company going into insolvent liquidation, save in respect of a "person connected with the company" (otherwise than by reason only of being its employee), in which case the time limit was two years.

As the declaration of trust was made one year and eight months prior to the resolution of the company to go into creditors' voluntary liquidation, the transaction could not be avoided as a preference unless it was entered into for the benefit of a connected person.

Solicitors: Isadore G. Keely Beedham, Solihull.

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His Lordship concluded that the 1985 Rules applied to each of the nine contracts. In the eight football cases the applicable provision was paragraph 2(2)(b) requiring a "just estimate" taking account of hindsight. In the promotional contingency policy case, paragraph 2(2)(a) applied and the value fell to be assessed on a "return of premium" basis.

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[Judgment December 3]

For the purposes of determining whether a declaration of trust by a company in favour of its employees' pension scheme was a preference within the meaning of section 239 of the Insolvency Act 1986, the so-called creditors in whose favour the alleged preference was granted were the trustees of the pension scheme collectively.

While a trustee was usually considered as a person connected with the company, where the terms of the trust conferred a power that could be exercised for the benefit of the company or an associate of the company, such as a director or shadow director of the company, or a close relative by blood or marriage of the same, section 435(b) of the 1986 Act disqualified that rule in the case of a pension scheme, even in the case of a small pension scheme whose beneficiaries consist solely of persons who were connected with the company.

Miss Heather Williamson, QC, sitting as a deputy judge in the Chancery Division, so held in a reserved judgment delivered on the respondents' summons under Order 14A of the Rules of the Supreme Court that the respondent trustees of the Saunders Retirement Benefit Scheme: Edwin Arthur Saunders, Janet Marion Saunders, Nicholas James Alexander Saunders, Simon Edwin Saunders and the Berkeley Burke Trust Co Ltd, were not "persons connected with the company" within the meaning of section 240(1)(a) of the 1986 Act.

The plaintiffs, Frank Arthur Sims and Barry David Lewis, the liquidators of Thirty-Eight Building Ltd, sought a declaration that the company's declaration of trust dated March 31, 1995 in favour of the first four respondents was void as a preference pursuant to section 239 of the 1986 Act.

Mr Adam Goodison for the liquidators; Mr John Randall, QC and Mr Peter Starovic for the respondents.

By a declaration of trust made on March 31, 1995 the company went into creditors' voluntary liquidation. The statement of affairs showed assets of £400 and liabilities of £3,993,951, the bulk of which was described as a loan of £2,943,104 from its subsidiary.

For the declaration of trust to be avoided as a preference, it had to be proved that it was made "at a relevant time." By section 240(1) of the 1986 Act the "relevant time" meant within six months of the company going into insolvent liquidation, save in respect of a "person connected with the company" (otherwise than by reason only of being its employee), in which case the time limit was two years.

As the declaration of trust was made one year and eight months prior to the resolution of the company to go into creditors' voluntary liquidation, the transaction could not be avoided as a preference unless it was entered into for the benefit of a connected person.

Solicitors: Isadore G. Keely Beedham, Solihull.

reference to the date of the winding up order should, in the case of a voluntary liquidation, be read as a reference to the resolution which constituted the commencement of the winding up under the 1986 Act (see sections 84 and 86) and the point at which the company "goes into liquidation" (see section 247(2)).

In his Lordship's view, this was an occasion where it was permissible to add words to the statute to avoid what would otherwise be an inexplicable anomaly.

All the previous legislation dealing with voluntary and compulsory liquidations. There appeared to be no sensible reason for excluding voluntary liquidations from a scheme which, as Mr Justice Hoffmann had observed in *Transit*, was designed to be exhaustive.

The rule-making power in the statute envisaged rules applicable to winding up generally. In the absence of any other indication, the natural assumption would be that the rules would cover the same ground. Mr Moss's suggested addition was a natural one, and was supported by the scheme of the 1985 Act. His Lordship adopted his proposal.

His Lordship concluded that the 1985 Rules applied to each of the nine contracts. In the eight football cases the applicable provision was paragraph 2(2)(b) requiring a "just estimate" taking account of hindsight. In the promotional contingency policy case, paragraph 2(2)(a) applied and the value fell to be assessed on a "return of premium" basis.

Solicitors: D. J. Freeman; Chyde & Co.

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The rule-making power in the statute envisaged rules



NEW ON VIDEO

Gary Oldman
finds himself
Lost in Space

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THE TIMES ARTS

THEATRE

The Lawrence
Atkinson
making
things bright



Visual Art: Amateurish? Stuffy? The old insults no longer apply to the thoroughly modernised Royal Academy, says **Richard Cork**

A breath of fresh air in Piccadilly

Three years ago the Royal Academy was racked by a well-publicised financial scandal. The much-linked bursar, Mr Clark, was found of embezzling nearly 300,000. Worse still, the incoming secretary, David Gordon, was horrified to discover that audited accounts had not been done since 1993.

Eventually found out the Academy had been operating at an annual deficit of £11m in 1994 and 1995, as well as on the way to another. "All our reserves were swallowed," Gordon says, "and everyone was in a state of anxiety." The RA's first, Sir Philip Dowson, led the bursar's fraud as a bitter blow and very dispiriting. If you'd asked me previously who I could trust in the RA, I'd have said him, "such a venerable institution which prided itself on its independence from state aid, the crisis was especially dispiriting. But now, as the RA prepares to open its much-heralded exhibition *Monet in the 21st Century* on January 17th, the mood is different. In the financial year it made a 300 operating surplus, under the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded the Academy £1 million to finish the renovation of its main galleries. Accumulated deficit has been reduced to £500,000, for the imminent *Monet* exhibition. Ticket sales are high, more than 600,000. Advance ticket sales reached 108,000 already, a booking record for any art exhibition, even if the entry charge is set at an unprecedentedly high £10. A large T-shaped marquee has been erected in the courtyard to house a ticket office, cafe and other facilities, despite bitter comments about the expected from other organisations premises in the Burlington House quadrangle.

What has the Academy managed to restore plummeted morale? One must turn to its fortunes. One must reform centred on strengthening the previous grasp of finances. A committee now enforces monetary discipline. The management committee harnesses Academicians, trustees and staff to coordinate the RA's increasingly convoluted activities.

According to Dowson, it has proved "enormously helpful" to Council, the Academy's governing body. But he admits that the management committee's advent provoked "two stiff debates among Academicians who feared that their power would be eroded". Dowson, who confesses he had no idea when elected about how much of his life the presidency would consume, thinks that "the Academy, like many historical institutions, outgrew itself. We now have a turnover of £15 million, and recent experience has made us stronger."

That is why the RA is reforming itself into a formidable fundraiser. The Exhibitions Patrons Group, set up only in 1997, has already added over £1 million to the Academy's coffers from donors, foundations and trusts. A new cafe is now open in the well of the Sackler Wing, and the shows held in the last 18 months have made a huge contribution to the RA's economic wellbeing.

Sensation alone attracted almost 300,000 visitors, making it the most highly attended contemporary art exhibition in Britain for half a century. Even Victorian *Fairy Paintings*, widely regarded before hand as a frivolous subject,



Preparing for next week's *Monet* blockbuster show, Royal Academy Secretary David Gordon recalls joining a debt-ridden organisation that had not done its accounts for two years

brought in a buoyant 110,000 visitors. And the recent survey of Picasso's ceramics claimed a healthy tally of 175,000. But is the Academy in danger of concerning itself too much with cash, at the expense of its primary mission as an art organisation? Norman Rosenthal, the ebullient exhibitions secretary, seems to think so. "Everything is about money in these heady new Labour days," he says. "Marketing, Management and Money — the three big M words. I hate it. I like art."

When the Academy moved to Burlington House from Trafalgar Square in 1868, it was expected to dedicate itself to educational pursuits. Hence the British Government's willingness to lease a prime Piccadilly location to the Academy for 999 years at a peppercorn rent. The benefits of such an arrangement remain vast, and David Gordon is the first to insist that the RA, in its determi-

nation "to become a more professional outfit", must at the same time "keep the flame alight". In other words its fundamental aim must always be to foster appreciation of the visual arts in Britain, just as its first President, Sir Joshua Reynolds, hoped when the institution was founded in 1768.

But how? Many visitors to *Sensation* might have imagined that Academicians wholeheartedly backed the provocative new directions explored by artists in the show. The truth is far more complex. Rosenthal was defiantly in favour of the exhibition. But some Academicians were aghast at the work it contained, in particular Marcus Harvey's notorious *Myra Hindley* portrait.

Several of the institution's most notable artist-members, including Gillian Ayres and Michael Sandle, resigned in protest. And Dowson says that the internal arguments about *Sensation* were bitter. "There were many things I didn't like in the show," he admits, "but that's not the point. It was a very important exhibition. In a MORI survey gauging the public reaction to *Sensation*, 91 per cent of visitors said that the Academy has a responsibility to show art even if it shocks or causes offence. Like it or loathe it, the work was serious and deserved to be looked at in a Central London gallery."

Drawn exclusively from the collection built up by Charles Saatchi, *Sensation* attracted a new young audience to Burlington House. But if they returned to sample last year's Summer Show, they may well have felt puzzled and disappointed. Apart from Gary Hume, who displayed a large and arresting new painting, none of the artists in *Sensation* was included. A seismic

shift still separates the stalwarts who exhibit in the Summer Show from the young generation who have made new British art of the 1990s internationally acclaimed. Compared with the intolerable stuffiness of the Academy 50 years ago, when the apocryphal President Sir Alfred Munnings railed against Picasso and modernity in general, Dowson is an exemplary liberal. "Over the past ten years the Summer Show has changed extraordinarily," he claims. "It is far less academic than before." But the exhibition still fails to represent many of the most outstanding British artists, from Sir Anthony Caro and Lucian Freud to Damien Hirst and Rachel Whiteread.

So does the RA have any plans, in its future exhibition programme, to expand its involvement with the young? "I would love to say that we will be doing *Sensation* after *Sen-*

sation," says Rosenthal. "Of course one would like to keep the new audience, and there is a big hunger for contemporary art. Maybe the summer exhibition should change after 2000: people still think the Academy is stuffy, with old Norman as an irritant." But exhibitions must be planned three years in advance, and such a schedule militates against organising a topical exhibition at precisely the right moment. Perhaps that is why the RA's main shows over the coming year concentrate on the past, culminating in September with a grand retrospective of paintings by Anthony Van Dyck.

Even so, Rosenthal is excited about staging three large installations of contemporary sculpture each year in the RA courtyard. The scheme commenced last year with 60 cast-iron figures by Antony Gormley called *Critical Mass*, standing, crouching, dangling and even climbing up the walls.

Tony Cragg will follow this summer, and Rosenthal says "it would be great to have artists from abroad like Jeff Koons and his giant puppy made of flowers". Planning permission has been obtained to modify the courtyard, and even move the hallowed bronze statue of Reynolds nearer the archway to make room for spectacular showpieces.

Another source of excitement is located just behind Burlington House, where the Victorian premises at 6 Burlington Gardens will be vacated by the Museum of Mankind in 2000. The RA, lacking a lecture theatre and desperate for space to accommodate its ever-expanding educational activities, wants to take over Sir James Pennethorne's resplendent edifice.

Michael Hopkins has been chosen to prepare a feasibility study, and Gordon feels that "the Government, in its quest for better education, should let us take this building on". Dowson, a distinguished architect himself, would also like it to become a showcase for modern architecture. "Nothing is more important than the built environment," he declares, "and artists don't realise what architects are up to. We live in a mad world with planning. We urgently need a place where chairmen of housing committees can go and see the finest work by contemporary architects."

Above all, though, Dowson nurtures a vision for the RA as a whole. "In my dream," he says, "I'd like to see the Academy more accessible to the public. Providing enjoyment is vital, of course, but I particularly want us to be more open. I suspect the RA can seem a bit historical, but it's not — it's breaking ground, and ought to share that excitement as an institution for everyone. Reynolds started it as a gift to the nation, and the public should feel it belongs to them."

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Saturday for details

CHANGING TIMES

Hanging out with a legacy

With a new album *Back On Top* ready for release in March, and a new nine-piece band to be broken in prior to a string of dates in America, Van Morrison elected to play his first show of the year on Tuesday night in the enchanting if somewhat sedate environs of Barnstaple on the North Devon coast. It nearly didn't happen. Thanks to a bout of flu, there was some doubt as to whether Morrison would take the stage of the 500-seat Queen's Theatre at all and, once he had done so, uncertainty as to how long he would stay.

An undermanned performer at the best of times, Morrison looked almost comically disoriented to begin with as he stood to attention in his peaked cap and shades and the band struck up *Jackie Wilson Said*. "Let it all hang out," he barked, his tone and posture suggesting the exact opposite, while the musicians doctored around the arrangement as if there was a baby asleep in the next room.

Strapping on a Les Paul guitar Morrison picked out a few chords with a distracted air as he wandered through a selection of less exposed items from his vast back catalogue, including a funky *Dweller on the Threshold* and a politely swinging *These Dreams of You*.

After remonstrating with various members of the band during a faltering version of *If You Love Me*, Morrison abruptly exited the stage, leaving

POP
Van Morrison
Queen's, Barnstaple



Exiting, stage left: Van Morrison

keyboard player John Savannah to sing *Warm Love* with the back of his head towards the audience. Despite the mood of crisis in the air, this was what the band (with whom Morrison never rehearses) had been doing all week, and their playing became noticeably more relaxed in his unexpected absence. Morrison too seemed to benefit from the respite, and when he returned to take command of *You Make Me Feel So Free*, his performance performed in concert before, and the set continued to alternate intriguingly between out-of-the-way oldies such as *Ivory Tower* and slightly rejigged numbers from last year's album, *The Healing Game*, including *Rough God Goes Riding* and *Sometimes We Cry*, not so much a greatest hits show as a re-examination of his legacy.

Despite some ragged endings, signalled in a highly visible pub rock style, there were superlative individual performances, particularly by guitarist Johnny Scott and Morrison's long-serving saxophonist, Pee Wee Ellis.

Things finally began to gel on a gorgeous version of *Georgia on My Mind*, a song ideally suited to Morrison's gruff staccato delivery, and the one moment of the night when he seemed to find the energy to dig into the emotion of the lyric. After that, it was sales all round during *Symphony Sid*, but Morrison's presence was diminishing fast. He managed a soulful *Have I Told You Lately* and a perfunctory *Moodance* then took his leave, still a work in progress after all these years.

DAVID SINCLAIR

Old-time organ grinder



He has outlasted most of the teen idols that he backed at the dawn of rock'n'roll. Long after the last Robbie Williams poster has been consigned to the dustbin, George Farnham will still be out on the road.

Farnham was never the most conventional pop star, and this celebration of his 40 years in showbusiness also ran along its own lines. Anyone who came expecting to hear red-hot, Flamingo Club-style R&B would probably have gone away somewhat puzzled.

Yeh Yeh flashed by at the very beginning, as if he was glad to get it out of the way, a strangely lugubrious *Toots Thielemans* ballad closed the first half, and the homely tones of Hoagy Carmichael's *Rockin' Chair* rang out at the encore.

Think of Farnham and you instantly see images of him sweating over the console of a battered Hammond organ. But he has always had a habit

of switching hats. This evening was, metaphorically speaking, an occasion for his snappiest jazz fedora, pulled low over his brow as he crooned in front of the BBC Big Band.

And shouted too. He is not the gentlest of vocalists; even so, an overbearing brass section kept shouldering him aside. Fans of Stan Kenton would have approved, but for the rest of us this was a simple case of too much big band, not enough singer.

Some overhasty arrangements proved a hindrance too, especially in conjunction with his sometimes mannered, horn-like vocals. It all worked best when Farnham and his conductor Steve Gray stuck to relatively simple, riff-based arrangements redolent of the Basic swing machine or the Ray Charles band. Chico O'Farrell's setting of the old hit *Bonnie and Clyde* supplied plenty of recoil.

The moments when the orchestra dissolved into a smaller unit were always telling, as in the opening of *When My Dreamboat Comes Home*, played in tribute to one of Farnham's vocal mentors, Mose Allison. Gray's *City Life* strutted along in cool urban style and cheekily inserted subliminal quotes from *Little Rascals* and other Monk tunes.

Clive Baker received a namecheck on *But Not For Me*, which featured one of Farnham's trademark vocal solos. Ingenious, yes, but the rare occasions when he slid across the stage to the trusty organ were even better.

CLIVE DAVIS

THE TIMES THURSDAY JANUARY 14 1999

Look, Death, get a life

NEW MOVIES: James Christopher sees Brad Pitt make the Grim Reaper sexy (if you're a teenage girl) in *Meet Joe Black*

There is a puzzle in *Meet Joe Black* that troubles Anthony Hopkins's media tycoon for three swollen hours of expensive, glossy melodrama. About to drop dead of a heart attack, Hopkins's billionaire Bill Parrish is granted a supernatural reprieve if he will instruct Death, also known as Joe Black, on the joys of life. Death, in short, wants a vacation. "Why me? Why now?" asks Parrish, reasonably spooked when he discovers that Death has borrowed the body of Brad Pitt. "Call it boredom," says Black, metaphorically shrugging his shoulders and inspecting his fingernails.

One sympathises with the grim one. After an infinity spent hobbling around in a shabby cloak, clutching a scythe and being reviled for his indiscriminate slaughter of humanity, Death wants to find out what this fuss called being alive is all about. He might be naïve but he has an impeccable taste in bodies. Forget the Baby Doll Angel with Grateful Dead tattoos, let's have that golden-haired lawyer conveniently flattened like a rag doll in a car accident. It's a shocking scene that injects a dose of black humour into the otherwise life-affirming piece of whimsy that director Martin Brest makes from the original 1934 film, *Death Takes a Holiday*.

Fun for Black is hell for Parrish. Sworn to keep Black's true identity a secret to avoid being whisked away like Faust, Parrish has to dream up excuses as to why this immaculately polite social incompetent who guzzles biscuits and peanut butter is following him around like a poodle.

The subsequent joy of Brest's film is seeing the omnipotent Joe Black flapping around like a fish out of water and discovering the confusion of falling in love with Parrish's scurrilous daughter, Susan (Claire Forlan). Typically, it's Forlan's sexy medic, a far prettier version of the young Barbra Streisand, who does all the running — a marathon rather than a sprint. Death, it transpires, is a shy, fumbling virgin who doesn't know how his lips, let alone his fies, work. But what a battle of the close-ups she all dewy eyes and confused, animated eyebrows, he glazes as a corpse. Necrophilia has never looked more one-sided.

Nor, unfortunately, has a film. The double-act between Hopkins and Pitt is decidedly lopsided. While Pitt is perfectly in tune with his comic creation, Hopkins's media baron lends the film a gravitas it simply does not deserve. He is brilliant delivering crisp lines with that world-weary, melancholy charm. And he is lavishly indulged. You can almost feel the cameras bowing and scraping as Parrish rumbles into fabulously appointed rooms to make heartfelt speeches to his daughters over dinner, or to fight the takeover bid that threatens to pull his empire apart.

But you could suppose ships in the pauses between him and Black. They are not only entities from two different dimensions, but two com-

Meet Joe Black
Empire, 12, 181 mins
Brad Pitt, aka Death,
discovers sex on holiday

The Opposite of Sex
Warner Village West End,
18, 100 mins
Caustic satire concerning
political correctness

Buttons
ICA, 102 mins
Kinky Czech comedy that
squeezes humor from the
upholstery

Dobermann
Metro 18, 103 mins
Nihilistic splatter-movie for
the unreconstructed

Sour Grapes
Virgin Tricadero, 15, 92 mins
Frothy sitcom dressed up
as a movie

pletely different films. Brest spends far too long trying to give both characters unwarranted credibility, when the film's soul already belongs to Pitt's Black. He is, after all, the most unlikely, nay unbelievable, Death one can hope to meet. But despite his vacant sounding voice, his zombie mannerisms and his quirky economy with the truth, this is the kind of romantic figure unbalanced schoolgirls are dying to meet.

The puzzle confusing Christina Ricci's 16-year-old sociopath in *The Opposite of Sex* is exactly that: what is the opposite of sex? That she regurgitates a homily about loving relationships on something resembling a postcard at the end of the film should not detract from Don Roos's blistering satire on political correctness. But it does, because it does not fit.

Ricci's Dedee is a wonderfully anarchic invention: all puppy fat, cleavage and acid commentary. She makes Alicia Silverstone in *Clueless* sound like a papal envoy. Fleeing her ghastly trailerpark home, she throws herself on the mercies of her gay half-brother, Bill (Martin Donovan), a 35-year-old English teacher with a soft heart and a private income. Dedee is not exactly enamoured of homosexuals but that doesn't stop her seducing Bill's beefcake boyfriend Matt (Ivan Sergei), getting pregnant and high-tailing it to Los Angeles with \$10,000 of Bill's money.

The mischievous novelty of Don Roos's film is Dedee's caustic voiceover in a film stitched entirely out of her flashbacks. As the hapless Bill and his spinster neighbour, Lucia, chase Dedee and Matt across America, Dedee mercilessly shreds their motives and seizes lives from the unreliable armchair of hindsight. It's Thatcher for the MTV generation.

As the money runs out and the wheels come off Dedee's quest to find something more lasting than

sex, control of the film swings in Lucia and Bill's favour. It is a clever piece of manipulation by director Roos. But he loses Ricci's delicious sting and the plot starts feeling suspiciously soppy. Lisa Kudrow's fabulously repressed Lucia keeps it simmering with a mixture of semi-hysterical outrage — "My God, she (Dedee) is the human tabloid!" — and laterating self-pity at her own inability to find a man. She is abetted by several priceless cameos from the likes of Lyle Lovett as a geeky, Lucia-infatuated sheriff, and Johnny Galecki as a mincing sleazeball. But the glib platitudes with which Dedee finally wraps up her awfully big adventure leave a disappointing aftertaste.

The title of Petr Zelenka's award-winning Czech film, *Buttons*, is derived from a most peculiar fetish. With a pair of false dentures clamped between his thighs, a distinguished-looking gentleman gets his thrills by secretly prising the buttons off upholstered seats with a few expert shifts of his bumocks. "Nothing else excites him," says his wife apologetically to a dinner party host whose antique sofa her husband has just devastated.

I never becomes clear what the thrill actually is, but this is entirely typical of the motley characters who people Zelenka's intriguing film. Here six short stories are linked by a daisy chain of coincidences. The first, a sepiatinted sequence, takes place in the tense cockpit of the *Enola Gay* just before the atom bomb is dropped on Hiroshima. The others unfold exactly 50 years later in Prague, showing how urban life is an absurd *La Ronde* of cause and effect inspired by ambition, obsession, perversion, guilt and jealousy.

A taxi driver picks up two lovers who indulge their illicit passion at high speed on the back seat. An unemployed railway guard escapes his nagging wife to lie under passing trains and spit with astonishing accuracy at the numberplates. A hygiene-obsessed psychoanalyst causes a car accident while spraying his mouth. Linked by nothing more substantial than a phone call, a taxi ride or, in the *Enola Gay*'s case, a ghost, these tales of chance make a mockery of a modern world which prides itself on rationality, efficiency and the ability to launch rockets carrying sperm into outer space. For a low-budget satire this is impressive stuff, not least because of the sheer amount of comedy Zelenka squeezes from his cutesy big themes.

Life is blissfully uncomplicated in Jan Kounen's splatter-movie, *Dobermann*. From the roomer's computer graphic of a gun-toting man with a snarling dog's head unarmies on the credits, you know you can pack your brains in your boots. Here, Rufus Sewell lookalike Vincent Cassel leads a gang of ultra-violent Mad Max types on a series of bank heists armed with enough rocket launchers, mammoth handguns and exploding bullets to take out the French National Guard. Against him stands Tchéky



Brad Pitt and Anthony Hopkins join the fold in *Meet Joe Black*, Martin Brest's patchy remake of the 1934 classic *Death Takes a Holiday*

Karyo's Gestapo cop who, when he's not pulping innocent teenagers in police cells, is snorting amphetamines and stubbing his cigar out on somebody's forehead. One step on from a comic and a step away from an arcade game, *Dobermann* is fabulously clichéd, grossly amusing and awesomely un-PC. The only significant female role is a

gun-licking, mute, gypsy model (Monica Bellucci) who gets sexually turned on by the gratuity of it all. You would have thought that this grown-up, stylish-looking cast had better things to do. But you can't help but admire the comic ingenuity with which various goons are dispatched, shot in the groin, etc. In his first feature, Larry David,

co-creator of the sitcom *Seinfeld*, tries to pass off his comedy *Sour Grapes* as a film. He fools no one. An insufferable jock, Richie (Craig Bierko), borrows a couple of quarters from his brain-surgeon cousin Evan (Steven Weber) and promptly wins a \$436,000 jackpot on a fruit machine in Atlantic City. He refuses to divide the spoils, the cousins

fall out, their families fall out, and a ludicrous game of brinkmanship ends with Evan accidentally cutting the testicles off a famous TV star, while Richie tries to bump off his doting mother. Here things finally get amusing. But without the canned laughter this glorified sitcom sounds hollow for awfully long stretches.

Can the Jacqueline du Pré film improve on previous efforts to portray music on screen? Geoff Brown reports

What colour is C sharp minor?

E arly on in the tempestuous melodrama of *Hilary and Jackie*, the new film about Jacqueline du Pré, our young heroine performs at a music competition. This is a key moment in the story's development, though our response may be blunted by what the camera gets up to. As she plays, it spins around du Pré and her cello, making her waltz and making us giddy.

Cameras always do this whenever a director, in this case Anand Tucker, gets in sight of a musician playing a solo instrument. Long ago the conjuring up of romantic ardour might have been the aim, but now all we see is a tiresome cliché.

Tucker's film then moves on, sometimes to good effect, sometimes to bad, to explore another stock movie ingredient: the artist as a genius, if not insufferable, suffering. Remember Gary Oldman's boorish Beethoven, raging through Bernard Rose's *Immortal Beloved*? Or Tom Hulce's Amadeus? And dare I mention the name of Ken Russell, a man who loves music through and through, but does hateful things to prove it?

But this whirling camera in *Hilary and Jackie* highlights one of the many practical problems of marrying images to music, especially classical. The camera must do something when music rather than dramatic narrative fills the screen. Do you try to complement the music's supposed mood with cloudscapes, skyscrapers, cute cartoons of dancing hippopotamuses, Roger Daltry acting barney (as in Russell's *Lisztomania*), or colliding abstract spheres and spirals? How, in short, do you visualise music?



Gary Oldman's Beethoven re-enacts the firesome movie cliché of the artist as suffering genius in *Immortal Beloved*

This is a question that has teased minds ever since people started to think about the relationships between the senses. The link between the eye and ear starts with the very notation of music, its patterns of symbols and staves, black notes, white notes, rectangles, hairpins, half-circles with dots. No wonder some contemporary scores have been exhibited in art galleries. Colour-coding individual sounds has also exercised minds. "Colour organs" have been built, the first perhaps in 1734, projecting different lights as different keys were struck. Scriabin put one into his musical poem *Prometheus*. Later this century, Messiaen tussled with the colour of music and time in numerous works, including *Chronochromie*, to be performed at the Barbican on

Friday during the BBC's Messiaen weekend. And once you struggle to describe music in words, as poet or critic, you constantly test the viability of visual metaphors. An extreme was reached in the 19th century by the German writer and composer E.T.A. Hoffmann, who dressed one of his characters in "a coat the colour of C sharp minor with an E major coloured collar". I wonder if John Lewis has one.

Hoffmann, of course, was being deliberately perverse. But once cinema was up and running, the way was open for such fancies of synaesthesia to be tested in celluloid. The Germans in the 1920s and 1930s were particularly curious about finding visual correlates to music, though the abstract work of a film-maker like Oskar Fischinger makes you realise the perils of the exercise. On the screen, you get surging spheres, dancing lines, spiralling circles and bobbing rectangles: delightful in their way, but tied to over-familiar classical selections like Brahms's Hungarian dances, hideously recorded, or chunks of a Brandenburg Concerto. Now the strait-laced soundtracks hold the images back, which is not the case with the pieces by Fischinger and others cut to popular music and jazz improvisations.

A film-maker really gets tested if the images used to match the music are determinedly representational. The key work here is Disney's *Fantasia*, first released in 1940. The unseen Philadelphia Orchestra is conducted by Leopold Stokowski, who appears between sequences alone on the podium, conducting nothing but a sunset glow. Fischinger himself worked at a distance on the one purely abstract section, matched to Bach's *Toccata and Fugue in D minor*. But the bulk of the images consist of the Disney artists' freakish imaginings: frolicsome centaurs, darting Cupids with heart-shaped bottoms, fish with come-hither eyes. Here we enter dangerously subjective territory, though it is one familiar from childhood. Children are traditional-

ly led towards classical music through descriptive pieces such as Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*. In one way it makes sense. But music is so much more than images depicted in sound: music is structure, volume, density, rhythm, melody, counterpoint, harmony, dissonance, and any "meaning" it contains is locked into its formal constituents. How dreadful to go through life always associating Beethoven with Disney's kitsch or Oldman's scowl!

Yet we had better get used to the dangers and joys of intermingling music and image. Listen to the spirit of the age. It is not the age for absolute music, constructed in laboratories with graph paper, slide rules and 12-note rows. The contemporary music in fashion today bristles with extra-musical associations, from Michael Daugherty's hip homages to American popular culture to Messiaen's wondrous aviary. Over the past 30 years the formal properties of cinema have fed more and more into serious compositional techniques: you get musical close-ups, flashbacks, or an anarchic collage resembling a Warner Bros cartoon. The next 30 years will doubtless see sound and image fusing even more, helped by developments in digital technology. Along the way, I just hope someone finds a different way to film a young girl playing the cello.

In the heat of the moment

DANCE

Romeo and Juliet Festival Hall

from the first moment he sets eyes on her in the crowded ballroom you know he is doomed to follow this love wherever it will take him. He must have danced this role dozens of times, yet he still manages to give his Romeo a fresh amorous impetus. In the balcony scene the sheer pleasure of dancing with Guillem was written all over his body. William Trevitt, in his last role with the Royal Ballet (he being one of the five male dancers who have jumped ship mid-season), is a fine Mercutio, full of swagger and laughter, and — no mean feat this — making us believe in every minute of poor Mercutio's protracted death scene. Trevitt, Cope and Shi-Ning Liu's Ben-olio (a frisky performance) formed an enjoyably blokish alliance, while Christopher Saunders's remarkable Tybalt was their suitably vile opponent.

Nicholas Georgiadis, the ballet's original designer, has provided new sets tailored to fit the Festival Hall's problematic stage. The look is dark and claustrophobic, as if Verona is oppressed by the gloom of the leaping Capulets and Montagues.

DEBRA CRAINE

LISTINGS

Corin Redgrave's Wilde

ARTS

CLASSICAL CDS

Poulenc centenary discs

Maroon signals distress

RECOMMENDED TODAY

Guide to arts and entertainment compiled by Matt Hargie

LONDON

ANDRÁS SCHIFF Returns only for this recital where the virtuoso Hungarian pianist displays his refined yet vigorous musicianship. The all-Schubert programme features Andras in C, D-flat and E-flat sonatas, D-flat and E-flat sonatas, D-flat and E-flat sonatas. Wigmore Hall (0171-495 2141). Tonight, 7.30pm.

VASSA Sheila Hancock heads a terrific cast, playing the family matriarch in Corin Redgrave's new version for the Almeida season. Albery (0171-389 1730). Preview from tonight, 7.30pm.

SONG RECITAL The bass baritone Jonathan Veira takes a break from his traditional operatic repertoire to sing a selection of songs by John Jefferys, Fred and Shelley Katz who also accompany on the piano. St John's (0171-222 1061). Tonight, 7.30pm.

THE GLORY OF LIVING British debut for Albanian-born Rebecca Gurney's drama of excitement and danger in the trailer parks. Kathryn Hunter directs. Ambassadors (0171-585 5000). Preview from tonight, 8pm.

LORD OF THE FLIES William Golding's vivid tale of terror and death on a remote island, adapted by Nigel Williams and directed by Alan Ayckbourn for the Pinter Theatre Co. Lyric (0181-741 8701). Preview from tonight, 7.30pm.

ELSEWHERE

BIRMINGHAM Corin Redgrave performs Oscar Wilde's *De*



Sheila Hancock stars in *Vassa* at the Albery

Profoundly, his passionate letter from Reading (see, in repertoire with *Just Not Fair*, (see review, page 37)). Birmingham Rep (0121-236 6771). Opens tonight, 7.45pm.

BRISTOL The distinguished Danish conductor Michael Schønwald replaces the indisposed Herbert Blomstedt in the evening's concert by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. A slightly changed programme now comprises Mendelssohn's Third Symphony and Brahms's First Piano Concerto played on an original 1875 Bösendorfer by Alexander Lubbock. Colston Hall (0117-9223882). Tonight, 7.30pm.

NEW WEST END SHOWS

Jeremy Kingston's choice of theatre showing in London

House full, returns only (H) Some seats available (S) Seats at all prices

I WEEP AT MY PIANO Told by an actor-regency Hayley Cameron, Richard Cawthra and Stephen Hopper play *Deaf* and *Deaf* in a hilarious evocation of London's last years. Hayley Cameron (0171-223 2223) (S)

PERFECT DAYS Suburban perfectionism's award-winning performance as the first of a series of plays by John Lichfield. Lichfield's play, *Perfect Days*, is a hilarious evocation of London's last years. Hampstead (0171-223 2223) (S)

THE COLOUR OF JUSTICE Translated reconstruction of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. Titled to coincide with the month's publication of the findings. Politically relevant. Theatre 503 (0171-338 1000)

KRAPP'S LAST TAPE Edward Petherbridge's touring performance as Krapp's 69th birthday, celebrating his 69th birthday. Krapp's Last Tape - total playing time 30 seconds. Arts Theatre (0171-438 3334)

FILMS ON GENERAL RELEASE

James Christopher's choice of the latest movies

NEW RELEASES

LITTLE VOICE (15) Mark Hamill's wonderful version of Jim Carrey's stage hit, Jane Hancock stars in a hilarious evocation of London's last years. Michael Caine, Ewan McGregor, Brenda Blethyn and Jim Broadbent stars in the film.

THE GREESE (15) Dances Washington, Annette Bening, and Bruce Willis tip over each other's shoulders as they try to deliver an Arab terrorist offensive in Manhattan. Chillingly real, beautifully acted. Director Edward Zwick finger a real nerve.

PSYCHO (15) Hopkins remake of Hitchcock's original. Gila Vanc Sant re-enacts the classic horror movie in colour, massed the rans and misrepresents the shattering suspense. With Vince Vaughn and Anne Heche.

THE 10TH (15) Low-budget sci-fi adventure by David Aronowicz that charts the madness of a genius mathematician haunted by nightmares and money-mad investors. Sean Connery is the mad scientist.

ANGEL DUST (15) Cool Japanese melodrama about a psychic detective who has to find her former lover and mentor for killing on the Tokyo bus. Sogo lead directs.

TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT (PG) A romantic comedy about the life of Howard Hawks's 1944 classic in which Lauren Bacall shoots fish in a barrel and Humphrey Bogart falls head over heels.

THE ACID HOUSE (18) Three darkly comic tales of drugs, drink and hallucination by Irvine Welsh. An indigestible cocktail. With Stephen McCole, Ewan McGregor and Kevin McKidd.

STAR TREK: INSURRECTION (PG) Patrick Stewart's Enterprise crew come to the rescue of a peaceful race who have found the end of the world. Lightly amusing. Director, Jonathan Frakes.

ENEMY OF THE STATE (15) Will Smith's lawyer lurches upon a political conspiracy. Excitingly acted, somewhat over-the-top. Director, Jonathan Frakes.

WHAT DREAMS MAY COME (15) Robin Williams wanders through the streets trying to find his loved ones. Technically dazzling, but subverted by a woolly script. With Annette Bening, Cuba Gooding Jr, and Alan Rickman. Director, Vincent Ward.

NEW ON VIDEO

LOST IN SPACE

Entertainment, PG, 1998

A CAMPY, low-budget TV series of the 1960s balloons into another effects-laden Hollywood blockbuster. William Hurt and Mimi Rogers head the Space Family Robinson, whose trip to Jupiter is sabotaged, leaving them prey to a drifting ship full of hungry spiders, a space monkey called Blawp, and the very suspicious Dr Zachary Smith (another villainous role for Gary Oldman). Under the direction of Stephen Hopkins, effects, sets and costumes offer plenty for the eyes, but the screenplay is lame. Available to rent.

THE BITTER TEA

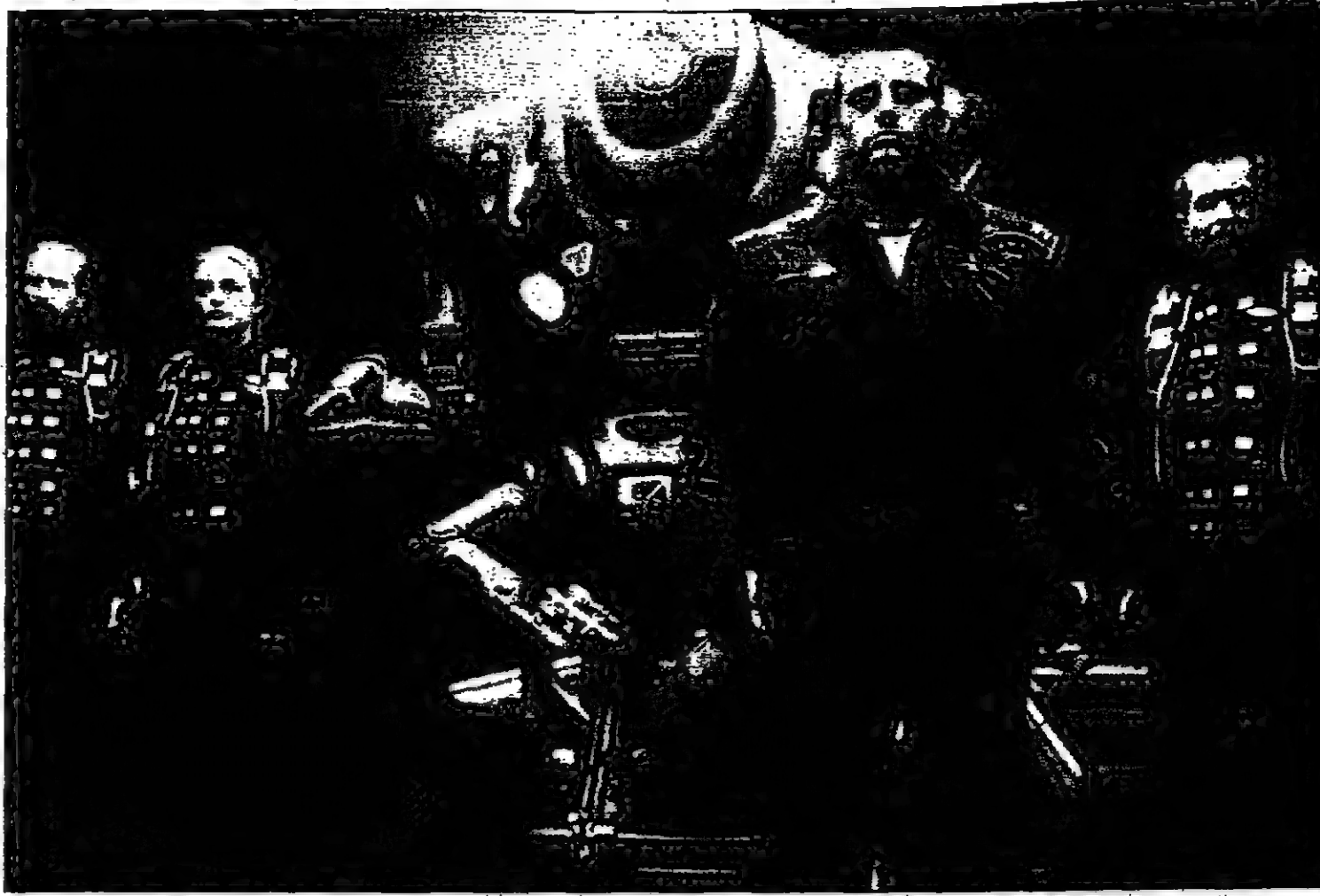
Of General Yen, PG, 1933

FRANK CAPRA may have made his name with his optimistic fables of the late 1930s and beyond, but in his earlier days he directed much more varied fare, including this gorgeously photographed, astonishing exercise in seriousness, slinky melodrama. Barbara Stanwyck stars as the missionary who falls for a Chinese warlord. Other early Capra films newly available include *American Madness* (1932), a rip-roaring drama with Walter Huston as a bank president besieged by the Depression, and the comedy *Platinum Blonde*, with Jean Harlow.

DAY OF WRATH

BFI Films, PG, 1943

THE Danish director Carl Theodor Dreyer could not be less fashionable, but his austere sculpted images, rigorous close-ups and mix of psychology and spirituality have all helped to shape modern cinema. This is a typically stark film about witchcraft, set in a 17th-century landscape of spare grey chambers and severe black costumes where there is no place for characters or spectators to hide. A repressive priest forces a confession of witchcraft out of an old peasant woman, whose curse brings down calamity on himself and his young wife, Gloomy, but great.



Matt LeBlanc (second from right) and Gary Oldman (far right) encounter life, but not as we know it, of course, in the big-budget *Lost in Space*

can reach into his characters' soul. Especially in this riveting adaptation of Georges Bernanos's novel about the forlorn life of a peasant schoolgirl in a hostile world. The cast, as usual, is non-professional; there is little music, apart from a few extracts from Monteverdi. Not a barrel of laughs, but the film's humanity and capacity to move brings its own huge rewards.

MOUCHETTE

Nouveaux Films, 15, 1966

FEW directors are more with less than the great French film-maker Robert Bresson. His style goes beyond simplicity: with a few shots of hands at work or faces in repose, he

can reach into his characters' soul. Especially in this riveting adaptation of Georges Bernanos's novel about the forlorn life of a peasant schoolgirl in a hostile world. The cast, as usual, is non-professional; there is little music, apart from a few extracts from Monteverdi. Not a barrel of laughs, but the film's humanity and capacity to move brings its own huge rewards.

A THOUSAND ACRES

PolyGram, 15, 1997

BEWARE the Hollywood film that takes itself too seriously. Like this one, a worthy slog through the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of Jane Smiley that lifts the themes of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and transports them to the American Midwest. The cast is powerful. Jessica Lange

Michelle Pfeiffer and Jennifer Jason Leigh play the daughters of crusty patriarch Jason Robards, who sows the seeds of family destruction when he divides up his thousand-acre farm among them. The director is Jocelyn Moorehouse, still to top her first film, *Proof*. A rental release.

GEOFF BROWN

NEW CLASSICAL CDS: Poulenc parties on; Czech opera by a Czech soprano; and a piano-playing politician

VOCAL

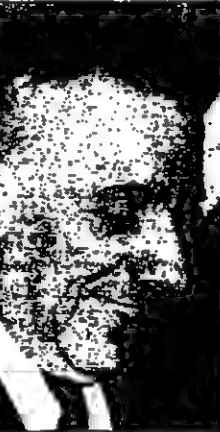
POULENC

Le Roux/Cachemalle/Rogé

Decca 460 326-2 *** £30.99

POULENC's centenary is celebrated on disc by a delicious new two-CD set of his songs which dips into the diary of his entire life through his settings of the poetry of Eluard, Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Lorca and Cocteau.

François Le Roux, the baritone who dominates the first disc of this pair, gives a passionate performance of the Eluard cycle, *Tu jour, elle nuit*, and has the measure of *Le Travail du peintre*. Poulenc's little gallery of artist portraits. The more poised and polished baritone of Gilles Cachemalle is ideally suited to the long lines of Poulenc's farewell to song in *Nuage*; yet he can bluster away with the best of them in the bucolic *Chansons villageoises*. The *Huit chansons polonoises*, Poulenc's "harmonisations" of songs of farewell written at the time of the Polish In-



Poulenc (left) is celebrated in two CDs of his songs and three CDs of his piano music, interpreted by Rogé (right)



Opera

EVA URBANOVÁ

Erato 3984-2341-2 *** £15.99

The Czech soprano Eva Urbanová first caught the ear at the end of last year in Decca's outstanding recording of *Rusalka*. There she sang the icy princess to Renée Fleming's water nymph. In Dvořák's fairytale opera, princesses usually lose out to pond dwellers, especially when the latter is in the hands of *Ms Fleming*. But Urbanová is clearly not a lady to sit in the shadows.

In Erato's solo disc, taken from a Prague concert a year ago and devoted entirely to Czech opera, Urbanová shows that she too can address the silver moon in Rusalka's invocation.

She is prepared to take heavier roles too. The Kostelníková aria from Janáček's *Jenůfa* brings with it unbridled passion. And she has the soft touch with the lullaby from Smetana's *The Kiss*.

The second half of the recital goes to another Smetana opera, *Liluse*, a patriotic piece generally disintegrated for state occasions, but not much heard outside his homeland. It

is a strident affair, but Urbanová fights gustily against all the brass of the Prague Symphony conducted by Ondřej Lenard.

Urbanová sounds a bit tired by the time she reaches the last of Libuše's six prophecies. Who wouldn't be? She must be aware of pushing herself too hard and too far.

JOHN HIGGINS

ORCHESTRAL

PADEREWSKI

Symphony in B Minor (Polonia)

BBC Scottish SO/

Maksymik

Hyperion CDA67056 *** £14.99

PRIME ministers occasionally play the piano, but it is not often that concert pianists become Prime Minister. Ignacy Jan Paderewski, not content with being lionised as a virtuoso of the highest order, became the first Prime Minister of newly independent Poland in 1919. He was also a compos-

er, mostly of works for the piano. His Piano Concerto in A minor has been recorded several times, but there is no recording of his *Symphony in B Minor* (Polonia) currently in the catalogue, and this new Hyperion release is actually the first version to be issued outside Poland.

Liszt and Tchaikovsky are the obvious models, the former in its all-encompassing structural layout (rather like a symphonic poem), the latter in the brooding, sometimes lachrymose mood and orchestral colouring.

Jerry Maksymik's account with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra reveals it as a thickly textured, even blowsy score (three *sarrusophones* add to the impression), but utterly original and well worth investigation.

BARRY MILLINGTON

★ Worth hearing
★★ Worth considering
★★★ Worth buying

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THEATRES

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THEATRE

Real-life tragedy on stage

ARTS

TOMORROW

Record company wars

THEATRE: In London and Birmingham two high-profile miscarriages of justice are relived on stage in a pair of docudramas

Questions that need to be asked

At the end of the Tricycle's re-creation of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, Michael Culver, who plays the chairman, Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, asks those in his courtroom to observe a minute's silence in tribute to the murdered boy and the courage of his parents in pursuing their crusade for justice. On the first night, it wasn't just the actors who stood quietly for what seemed far longer than 60 seconds, but the reviewers, the paying punters and Stephen's father and friends. It was a curious as well as a moving episode: a recognition that, for once, we were in a theatre to ponder real-life evidence that vitally concerned the moral health of us all.

Docudrama is a worrying genre, and the Lawrence Inquiry is open to misuse as a subject, especially as Macpherson prepares to publish the papers hot up with rumours of his findings. As I drove from Kilburn, I heard on the radio

that a policeman I had just seen convincingly portrayed in *Colour of Justice* was to face charges of incompetence. When 11,000 pages of evidence are reduced to 100, how can you be sure the truth is unslanted and you're not being manipulated? There were certainly moments in the Tricycle's similar staging of the Scott Inquiry, *Half the Picture*, when I felt it would be fairer to await the report itself.

But Richard Norton-Taylor won my trust for his editing of Lawrence. Though I was one of the 99.99 per cent of the population who did not attend it, I followed the proceedings, and know he has excluded evidence that would undermine the Met's claims to integrity and competence still further than the force itself has managed to do. Why did the police fail earlier to arrest the white thugs they had every reason to suspect of the black student's killing? Such questions persistently arise in *The Colour of Justice*, and are answered with evasions and quibbles by junior officers and with admissions of failure and apologies by their seniors: but a genuinely combative, cop-baiting dramatist might have gone a lot further.

As it is, there is much to trouble us. Why was Stephen's name not stamped as he lay dying in Egham back in 1993? Did the police really think this decent young man was a burglar who had been in a fight? Why was the initial hunt for his killers a desultory matter of roaming the local streets with torches that didn't work? Did one of the suspects' father, a drug baron, noble the police inquiry? Why was officer X00L, who stands accused of conniving with this gentle-



Doreen and Neville Lawrence (Yvonne Pascal and Tyrone De Rizzo) are the distraught parents in Richard Norton-Taylor's re-creation of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry

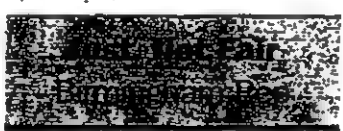
man, asked to look after a key black witness when the Lawrences launched their abortive prosecution of the alleged killers? Is there institutionalised racism in the Met? Nicolas Kent's production, packed as it is with matter-of-fact acting that isn't acting, has so many unpretentiously telling moments that it seems absurd to pick out one. Why, then, do I recall Tim Woodward as the churchgoer who crossed the road to help the dying Stephen and whose wife repeated 'you are loved' as he cradled him? Not just because such Samaritanism is intensely moving, but because even he says he suspected the boy was a mugger trying to trick him. As Macpherson will surely show, Britain has far to go before it can claim to be an equal society.

BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

In London the Tricycle Theatre is telling the story of a murder for which nobody has been found guilty in a court of law because the police omitted to proceed in the manner a democracy expects. In Birmingham the Rep's Studio Theatre is raising the memory of the Carl Bridgewater murder for which, by contrast, four men were imprisoned for 18 years until the Court of Appeal decided their convictions were 'unsafe and unsatisfactory'. They have not been declared innocent; however, and last month the Crown Prosecution Service decided not to prosecute the eight detectives who helped to put them away.

Meanwhile, in the Stephen Lawrence case, several senior officers whose conduct is open to criticism have conveniently retired. So they cannot be charged. How supportive the law is of its own.

Joys of freedom



Just, Not Fair is performed by Malcolm Tierney from a script by Jim Robinson, one of the Bridgewater Four, and tells something of his life before, after and during his time inside. Think back to the year before the Falklands war: does it all seem ancient history today? That's the length of time Robinson, and Vincent and Michael Hickey were locked away. The fourth man, Pat Molloy, died in jail.

Tierney, grey-haired, quietly speaking, sits for the most part on a

park bench beneath winter trees. A tree is what he first mentions, smiling, as if self-conscious at revealing something so privately important. 'Just to be under a tree,' he confides to us. 'Just to feel the bark, see how the roots come out of the earth.' And in the play's closing moments, a little over an hour later, he speaks of the wonder of being free to lock the doors of his car around him, having not touched a door handle for 18 years.

He speaks with persuasive candour of his life before young Bridgewater was killed, mining his teenage days as a clown in New South Wales for moments of comedy. He talks a little of his 17-day hunger strike, and says more about the 81

days on the roof at Gartree Prison after Kenneth Clarke rejected a petition for an appeal. But mostly his subject is the difficulty of persuading British people that injustice, police perjury and sadism in prisons could occur in their own country. Perhaps we do know this today, having grown infinitely more cynical of authority these past 18 years.

Greatly aided by Jessica Dromgoole's direction as his account moves between irony and stark revelation, Robinson's story is also a testament of dignified survival. Inevitably some of its arguments for reform recall Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*, and to help us to compare the two this famous text will from today be performed in repertory with Robinson's. Corin Redgrave playing the man in Reading Gaol. An imaginative and inspiring venture.

JEREMY KINGSTON

Curious pyjama games

I think that it is safe to say, without causing offence, that *A Special Offer* contains some of the worst acting seen on the London stage for a long time. At the start of the show a pyjama-clad couple enter awkwardly into a brochure-perfect bedroom, don a pair of wigs and proceed to rundle half-heartedly through a series of anodyne, subliminal relationship tableaux.

This is all horribly disturbing until one wigs that the painful gurning and hammy delivery are not all they appear to be. These people aren't just incidentally subliminal; they are genuinely on the lowest possible rung of the performance ladder, principally because their bedroom is not simply show-home perfect, it is actually still in the Sharps Bedroom showroom.

What is delivered in their performance is a monstrous amalgam of pasteurised afternoon soap operas, shopping channel infomercials

MIME FESTIVAL

A Special Offer Young Vic

and the imaginary lifestyle of the airbrushed families in a mail-order catalogue.

So far, so good; we are watching a piece of fantastical in-store entertainment. But the illusion of voyeurism is undermined by Lisa Gornick's splendidly funny demonstration of exactly the kind of embarrassing daffiness that real people do indulge in in the privacy of their own homes, which in her case apparently involves positioning plastic fruit in her underpants, then receiving Clinician pleasures from a blonde wig. The shopfloor actors' real lives increasingly intrude on their performances as true protestations of love destroy their chocolate-box romance.

Yet even this apparent truth is undermined by the presence of Audrey the floor manager, whose degree of control over their performance is difficult to gauge; are they a figment of her romantic imagination? Inanimate mannequins? Performing slaves?

As is often the case with devised performances, there is much material here that feels too incidental in its inclusion to make the show entirely satisfactory. 'Why,' asks the programme, 'is the sales assistant singing opera?' to which of course the answer is all because it's funny and because she is played by Rebecca Gale who happens to be an opera singer.

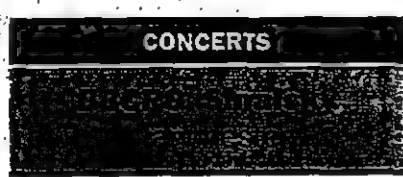
Much of the scripting also still feels like an improvisation. While there is both food for thought here and some superbly comic moments, the exploration of the sinister within the bland has been done before and with greater success.

HETTIE JUDAH

Tuneful Russians revisited

The Manchester audience cannot, it seems, hear too much Russian music. In spite of the BBC Philharmonic's recent overemphasis on that area of the repertoire, they still keep coming back for more - secure in the knowledge, no doubt, that with Vassily Sinaisky conducting there will be nothing half-hearted in the interpretation and nothing unidiomatic in the playing. Attendance at the Bridgewater Hall on this occasion was all the more impressive for the fact that at the head of the programme, alongside a Prokofiev concerto and a Rachmaninov symphony, there was a major work by Alfred Schnittke.

Or, perhaps it would not be entirely unfair to say, there was a travesty of a major work by Alfred Schnittke. The composer has only himself to blame for his *In Memoriam* - even though it was his great friend and ally Gennadi Rozdestvensky who talked him into it - but this orchestral arrangement of his Piano Quintet is



nowhere near as convincing as the original. Written in memory of his mother, the Piano Quintet is an essentially intimate work that, far from being intensified in its expressive effect by the extra colouring available from the orchestra (and, unfortunately, the organ), sounds contrived on the larger scale. It is true that contrivance is not alien to Schnittke's thinking but if *In Memoriam* had been conceived for orchestra, in the first place the material would have been quite different. So, although it was a timely tribute to the late composer, it was also a rather sadder one than intended.

The immediate consolation was the ex-

traordinary performance of Pekka Kuusisto in Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto. Not yet 23 (and looking even younger), he has a wonderfully accomplished technique, an apparently fearless presence and a rare taste in matters of phrasing and colouring. Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto, which is the more youthful work, might have suited him better than the Second, which requires more in the way of classical decorum, but it was an engaging performance even so.

As for Rachmaninov's Third Symphony, it takes even more than a fully committed Sinaisky and a well-prepared and generously indulgent BBC Philharmonic to demonstrate that it is more than a highly professional artifice. But you can do a lot with a few good tunes and, beginning with the lovely cello inspiration in the first movement, they certainly made the most of them.

GERALD LARNER

Prizewinners in good voice

In the week of the composer's centenary, Saturday night's Poulenc celebration by the Exmoor Singers, the Mixed Voice Choir of the Year in the recent Sainsbury's Competition, was a timely event. Poulenc is something of a gift to choirs of about average ability: his harmonies are always grateful and there is just enough textural variety to hold the attention. The idiom is, on the other hand, conservative in the extreme.

The Exmoor Singers under their music director James Jarvis gave four works of the French composer, emerging with much credit. The Sept

Exmoor Singers St John's, Smith Sq

Chansons exemplified the trials in store: exposed chording, unprepared high notes, sustained quiet passages giving way to animated outbursts. There were blemishes here, as elsewhere, but it would be ungenerous to dwell on them when there was so much to be impressed by.

Figure *humaine*, often considered Poulenc's masterpiece in the genre, is a powerful response to the Nazi occupation of Paris. The choir struck the right chord of urgency with some spirited highlighting of key words in *Rien du ciel et des planètes* and a progressive incitement to liberty in the last number that reached an exultant, if strident, climax.

Poulenc's *Quatre mots pour un temps de pénitence* found the singers fresh after the interval, but by the final item, the Mass in G Major, tiredness was beginning to take its toll. The soprano solo in the *Agnus Dei* was well taken by Ruth Beckmann.

Schoenberg's moving setting of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's poem *Friede auf Erden* (Peace on Earth) provided, in its broadly arching phrases, a welcome antidote to Poulenc's short-windedness. It was good, too, to hear Webern's *Enflicht auf leichten Kähnen*, its tonality on the verge of dissolution posing challenges for an unaccompanied choir (met creditably here as throughout).

BARRY MILLINGTON

Carnival of Venice

Venetian scarlet and gold glowed centre-stage at the Wigmore Hall on Tuesday. Trevor Finnock's harpsichord was a vibrant emblem of the music of Vivaldi and Marcello which rang out of an evening focussing on *L'estro armonico*, the set of concertos for solo violins Vivaldi wrote for the young orphaned musicians of the Ospedale della Pietà in Venice in the early 18th century.

The music-making, too, was opulent. The English Concert, of all period instrument groups, determines to show that Baroque stringed instruments can shine and sing with the best of them, and never more so than when Rachel Podger is at the helm. Her lead, in the two concertos for Four Violins, heightened the excitement of their games of pairs, with Finnock's harpsichord and Paula Chazaneu's



lute radiating, but never dominating the continuo group. Peter McCarthy's double-bass and Jane Coo's cello sprang into the limelight in the finale of the Concerto for Two Violins in D minor. They led the official soloists quite a dance after the grand fugue of the central movement. But, thanks to Finnock's buoyant direction, this too was footed feathily and seemed, for much of the time, like an exuberant round dance itself.

The light of Vivaldi's Venice was to shine as far north as little grey Weimar: this group of concertos made such an impression on Bach that he couldn't resist transcribing six of them for keyboard. Finnock

played just one: Bach's arrangement of the Op 3 No 9. After spinning gold filigree from the tirelessly imitating sequences of the first movement, Finnock built up a sense of concentrated meditation in the slow movement, as tiny threads of figuration were woven into the great ringing chords which provided their harmonic frame.

Bach's own secular cantata *Amore traditore* found a soulmate and, if truth be told, a superb, in Benedetto Marcello's fiercely eloquent paraphrase of Psalm 42, *Dal tribulatio augusto*. Matthew Hargrave, a bass-baritone of formidable range, plumbed the heights and depths of this prayer for justice and clemency as its words were in turn solemnised and shaken into new life by their musical setting.

HILARY FINCH

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Slender Lady by Charlotte Brown, 1997

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CHANGING TIMES

BOOKS

The flowering of passion and greed

Deborah Moggach wonders at the remarkable tale of the tulip, whose mysterious mutations brought delight and ruin from Turkey to The Netherlands

The Tulip is a stylish book, beautifully illustrated, and it gets off to a cracking start. Anna Pavord is one of our most inspired gardening writers and can make the building of a compost heap into high drama. The history of the tulip, in its early years, is a more ambitious subject, for the story of this flower is an extraordinary one. She writes: "Its background is full of more mysteries, dramas, dilemmas, disasters and triumphs than any beset *aficionado* could reasonably expect."

The tulip grows wild in Turkey and the Turks were the first to fall under its spell. In 1574 Sultan Selim II ordered 300,000 bulbs for his palace gardens. His chief gardener was also his chief executioner, and anyone who tried to trade in bulbs at a higher price than the official one was expelled from the city, or worse. The beauty of tulips were celebrated in their names — "Increase of Joy", "Star of Felicity" — and women were wooed by them: "When a young man presents a tulip to his mistress he gives her to understand by the general colour of the flower, that he is on fire with her beauty, and by the black base, that his heart is burned to coal."

Breeders developed new forms and wrote rulebooks specifying the perfect tulip. The passion peaked during the time of Sultan Ahmed III (1703-30), a man so besotted that his reign has been renamed The Tulip Era. The Sultan spent vast amounts on lavish tulip festivals. "Thousands of tulip flowers were mounted on pyramids and towers, with lanterns and cages of singing birds hung between them. Tulips filled the flowerbeds, each marked with a label of filigree silver." Guests dressed in clothes matching the tulips and hundreds of tortoiseshells walked around with candles on their shells. These festivals

THE TULIP
By Anna Pavord
Bloomsbury, £30
ISBN 0 7475 4296 1



would continue throughout all the nights that the tulips were in flower, and in the end caused the Sultan's downfall, when his people rebelled against such extravagance.

Meanwhile, in Europe, bulbs were fetching astonishingly high prices. The French were gripped by tulipomania, and in the early 17th century a miller exchanged his mill for one bulb of "Mere Brune". Fashionable women wore tulips in their décolletage. And in the Dutch Republic, speculation on tulip bulbs spiralled completely out of control.

The Dutch tulipomania is one of history's most bizarre episodes. How did such a sensible, God-fearing people succumb to such madness? I have recently explored this episode, in fiction, for it has all the ingredients of high storytelling — greed, lust for beauty, human weakness and a recklessly gathering momentum towards its own destruction. No novelist could have dreamt up such an enthralling drama.

By the early 1600s the Dutch Republic was a rich trading nation awash with capital. Growers were developing new varieties of tulips and those with rare mutations were fetching huge prices. Nobody knew how these occurred, so people started gambling on them, and this game of chance started to grip the nation. Specula-

tors ranged across the classes — bargekeepers and burchers, as well as the wealthy — and consortiums gathered in taverns where bidding was conducted in a fug of tobacco smoke. "Semper Augustus" was the rarest of all — a beautiful red and white tulip — and at the height of the madness one bulb could fetch the price of a townhouse. Tulipomania peaked in 1636 when speculation was conducted on tulip futures, and vast fortunes were both made and lost.

Priests railed against it but were powerless to stop this obsession with a flower which, in Dutch art, represented both the beauty and the fragility of life. The crash came in 1637 when the Government stepped in, but by this time the economy was seriously damaged and many lives ruined. Only recently has the secret of these mutations been discovered — they are caused by disease. If the priests had known that, how they would have thundered from their pulpits!

Although Pavord tries to keep up the pace, the story of the tulip since then slackens somewhat. In this country it fell out of fashion in the 18th century, when Capability Brown's influence replaced gardens with parks, and the story fizzles out into squabbles — between the North of England and the South, between working men's societies and professional growers. Our own Tulip War in the 1840s was caused by a quarrel over the perfect shape — whether "the pole should be a little depressed... which will give the flower a good shoulder". A very British reaction to this seductive flower which has wreaked havoc and imparted joy and which, like Cleopatra, is capable of infinite variety.

Deborah Moggach's *Tulip Fever* will be published later this year by Heinemann.



R.J. Thornton's *The Temple of Flora, 1812*: the British fashion for tulips was restrained compared with the craze that almost ruined the Dutch Republic

Slavery's legacy leaves a lasting mark



Phyllis Perry's literary forebears include Toni Morrison

Pain, we are taught to believe, is a passing thing — our bodies are not designed to remember it. But Phyllis Perry's intense first novel is a passionate argument that we should listen to the story that pain has to tell. The novel opens in 1994, as 34-year-old Lizzie is being released from an Atlanta mental hospital. Through the series of flashbacks and diary entries that in part make up this book the layers of the narrative — of truth and hidden lives — are slowly unfolded.

When Lizzie was 14 and the only child of black, middle-class parents, she had inherited her grandmother Grace's trunk, finding inside a memoir dictated at the end of the 19th century by her great-grandmother, Bessie. With it is also a quilt, made by Grace. The images appliquéd on the fabric tell the story of Bessie and how, as a child in Africa, she was separated

JILL WATERS
STIGMATA
By Phyllis Perry
Piatkus, £16.99
ISBN 0 7499 0458 5



from her mother and captured by slavers. Wrapped in the quilt, her head ringing with the strange words of her great-grandmother, Lizzie begins to dream of those vanished African days and when she wakes there is dust on her

feet and a burning sensation on her wrists.

By the time she is 20, Lizzie has begun to see her ancestors and talk in the voices of her long dead grandmothers. She feels the pain of scars which map the wounds of the manacles and whips inflicted on Bessie. But when blood begins to ooze from her injuries the doctors decide that this is dangerous self-mutilation.

Perry controls the layers of her narrative well, moving with confidence between Lizzie's life after her release and the episodes of "remembering" which confined her to a series of hospitals for 14 years. Lizzie's past incarnations as her own mother's mother and also as her great-grandmother are terrifying and revelatory.

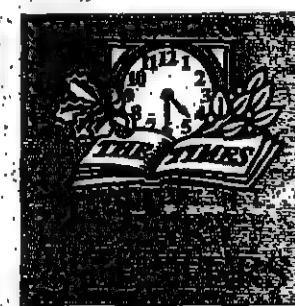
The vernacular of Bessie's memoir is both haltingly earthy and lyrical. Lizzie learns "at firsthand" the agony and the losses suffered by

successive generations of women in her family. A Roman Catholic priest at one of the hospitals introduces her to the idea of stigmata. It seems to make sense. She finally comes to terms with how her new past can bridge the gulf that exists between herself and her own mother.

At times the idea of reincarnation is a little strained — particularly in a new relationship that Lizzie forges with an artist who has painted her, although they have never met before. But as a device it serves its purpose well enough. Her publishers claim that Perry is part of the tradition of black American writing established by Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, and indeed at times there is a sense that this story has been told before. But it is a tradition of powerful writing and one this writer has every right to aspire to join.

■ THIS French have embraced the British fervour for ranking their novelists. Next Wednesday Kazuo Ishiguro will be made a Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres; the next day Salman Rushdie will be raised above him as a Commandeur of the same order. Well, Rushdie did win the "Booker of Bookers" for *Midnight's Children*, although practically the only reference to *le beau pays* in his novels is the mention of a "Mishadereous burglary" being drunk at a lunch party in Highgate.

■ Chris Hartley writes to us from the Midlands: "May I question the validity of the 'Christian answer' in Roger Scruton's review of *All in the Mind* by Ludovic Kennedy (Books, January 7). Why should the scientific description of one substantial entity, such as my wife, bring into doubt her own existence while a similarly defined description of another entity, the Earth, cast doubt only over the existence of her creator? I was also bemused to learn earlier that same day that religion differed from superstition because it does (Thought for the Day, R4). Some of us



are clearly missing something but I wonder what and would welcome clarification."

■ WHO says the literati are polite? At Monday's T. S. Eliot prizegiving in London (winner: T. Hughes), Martyn Goff, chairman of the board of the Poetry Book Society, thanked OUP for its financial support — given before it scrapped its poetry list. Response from poets and pundits alike? A bout of bores and kisses.

■ BUT interviewed in the current issue of the *Paris Review*, the American poet Mark Strand takes a line that will infuriate his hard-up fellows. Poetry, he says, "should have no monetary value". Do we hear more hissing?

books@the-times.co.uk

A critic who knows the way — and perhaps can drive the car, too

The blurb tells us that these essays make up "a book of passionate engagement". This officious claim, for which I feel sure we cannot blame the author, should be enough to put any reader off. Every good critic loves books and becomes deeply involved in the life inside them, and James Wood is a very good critic indeed. He has no need to exhibit passionate engagement, whatever that is supposed to mean. So do not be put off, but enjoy instead the many good things Wood has to offer, and the brilliance with which this review collection, drawn mostly from *The New Republic*,

The Guardian, and *The London Review of Books*, offers a central insight on each one of the authors under discussion. Wood is particularly brilliant on his own near contemporaries, pointing out the almost exaggerated Englishness of Julian Barnes, which is no doubt the reason why Barnes, like P. G. Wodehouse before him, has enjoyed such tremendous success among Anglophile readers in France.

Barnes is as English, it could be said, as was by stylistic adoption André Maurois, author of *Les Silences du Colonel Bramble*. Barnes is a cuddly author masquerading as a knowing one, and in that

sense makes a great contrast with that streetwise young American-by-adoption, Martin Amis.

Amis learnt from his master, Saul Bellow, "how to drop his characters deep into the tank of the contemporary", although in the process, very different from that of the great Bellow, he imprisons them in a burlesque act, like Laurel and Hardy or Tom and Jerry, out of which they cannot escape or develop.

Wood's forte is his ability to put a finger on exactly what is good about his authors and what is limiting. He is scrupulously fair about the very real charisma engendered by Toni

Morrison's successes, like *The Color Purple*, but points out the ways in which her magic must nonetheless be false: "Since fiction is itself a kind of magic, the novel should not be magical... The argument against magical realism in fiction should not be an argument about what is real and what is unreal, but an argument about belief."

Wood himself believes that belief is as necessary to a novelist as water is to a growing plant, and he strongly implies that the premises of Post-Modernism, however unconscious may be their operation in the psyche of a given writer, can only be both weakening and

restricting for a novelist of real talent. The psyche of a Melville or a Tolstoy was literally geared to belief, even though Melville may have had no idea what the white whale really signified, and Tolstoy could never rest securely in any belief that he thought he had found.

In the same spirit, Wood both profoundly respects and bitterly criticises the character of Sir Thomas More, not a man for all seasons but one in whom the natural goodness of humour and humanitarianism fought a losing battle with the ferocity of authoritarian conviction. He sees belief in oneself as a

cardinal virtue in Jane Austen: "It is the inner consciousness of her heroines that makes them both happy and, intelligent, and enables Anne Elliot in *Persuasion* to pity her father and sister for being less happy than she was... Her happiness was from within." This point is at once very simple and very subtle. The inner confidence of Jane Austen is itself a kind of faith that can inspire and hold a thoughtful reader.

Wood is as penetrating a connoisseur of a writer's style as he is of the ways in which a writer establishes his authority. "To be utterly free in language, to be absolute

master of what you do not own — this is the greatest desire of any writer." D. H. Lawrence can achieve his own marvelous exorcism with the apparent negligence of his gulls, "swinging like a half-born thought." Wood gives another graphic example: "In the silence it seemed he could hear the panther-like dropping of infinite snow." Why panther-like? It is perfect, and yet inexplicable — "subtly abstract" as Wood observes, and yet physically immediate. That perception gives a very good idea of his own virtues as a critic.

JOHN BAYLEY

مركز الامن الوطني

BOOKS

Never mind the creativity, feel the sweat

Do creative writing courses really add to the fund of literature?
On the evidence of two new works, they at least offer hope

The young concert pianist sits down at his instrument. There is an expectant hush. Will he really be as good as they say, this strapping now embarking on a musical career? Surely most of what you hear is hype. And then, when his hands are poised above the keyboard to begin, a whisper goes round the auditorium. Did you hear, says one to another, he actually practises? I heard, says someone else, he has had lessons. Practising? Lessons? Whatever next? A ripple of disgust moves through the audience. Where's the natural talent in that?

A laughable scenario, perhaps. But what if the artist in question is not a pianist but a writer? What if that writer has taken part in a creative writing course? Or, even worse, has a degree in the subject? What is an "MA in creative writing"? What can that possibly mean?

No more than our young pianist's degree in musicology. Neither is a guarantee of success; only evidence of the student's commitment to his or her art. The old perspiration/inspiration ratio, in my experience, still holds true: undertaking a degree in creative writing — there are now more than 20 MAs running in Great Britain alone — at least demonstrates a willingness to expend the necessary quarts of sweat.

Resistance to the teaching of creative writing in this country has lessened considerably since Malcolm Bradbury started up the first MA in the subject at the University of East Anglia nearly 30 years ago — with a single student, a young man named Ian McEwan.

Resistance in Britain, Bradbury points out, was always bound to be greater than it ever was in the United States, Canada or Australia where creative writing courses, from the 19th century on, existed as part of a conscious effort to form a literary culture.

But the British already had a literary culture, thank you very much: nobody had to sit Chaucer and Shakespeare in a fen-bound classroom and teach them how to write, did they? Of course not and what

Shakespeare wrought could never be "taught", as such. But — and here I will come out of the closet and confess I speak from personal experience — there can be few things as valuable to a writer as the goodwilled companionship and insight of other writers. When I did my MA in Creative Writing at the University of East Anglia, that was what I took away and continue to keep with me. Some are happy to struggle alone; for some, the knowledge that the struggle goes on too in others' heads is infinitely useful — and comforting.

The East Anglia course, has, since its inception, had a high profile. Andrew Motion has taken over from Malcolm Bradbury; writers like Rose Tremain, Kazuo Ishiguro, Deirdre Madden, Anne Enright and McEwan, to name a few, have been associated with it.

Now, published a few days apart, are two more books that bear the stamp of the course. A collection of short stories, *It Cracks Like Breaking Skin*, by Stephen Foster is published by Faber & Faber (£9.99; ISBN 0 571 9506 7) and a

novel, *Columbus Day*, by Janette Jenkins (Chatto & Windus, £10; ISBN 0 701 16851 3). What have these two writers learnt? Should we value them any more highly because they have served formal apprenticeships to their craft? Unfortunately, Foster's book bears some of the scars of creative-writing-itis. My first question was: does it? *It Cracks Like Breaking Skin* has a good sound; but does breaking skin, after all, crack? Writing that is carefully thought out as well as polished — and this is certainly polished prose in its minimalist way — shouldn't make the reader ask this kind of question.

These loosely linked stories depict, for the most part, a young man's growing up in the Midlands; they have the kind of flat, studied casualness that is in danger of giving the adjective Carveresque a bad name. Raymond Carver's art was so apparently simple that the temptation can be to believe that it's possible to write bluntly about not very much and still get a story at the end of it. But Carver's art was subtle, not simple, and this is just not true.

Foster has fallen into the trap: most of these short sequences (there are 17 of them, in a 150-page book) are vignettes rather than tales. They read like the beginning or the middle of something, but nothing whole. Character isn't given too much of a chance beyond caricature. There is, however, a voice lurking here: will the mostly central character of Hewitt become the protagonist of the novel on which Foster is apparently at work? It will be worth finding out.

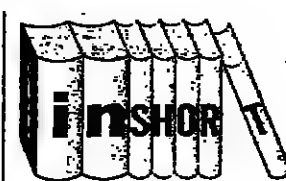
Janette Jenkins does have a story in her, and her first novel captures the unswerving love of a child with



Erica Wagner

truth and tenderness. It is narrated by Jess, whose mother Olivia's search for her own lost father — he disappeared when she was eight — tips Olivia into madness. The depiction of madness is a tall order for a novelist, and too often Olivia seems, stereotypically, a vague pale wraith in a long, unfashionable dress. What emerges as most compelling in this novel is the love that Jess's father, Roland, maintains for his very much younger, and very much damaged, wife.

Roland's development in the book from an unknown quantity smelling of whisky and leather to a movingly willing and inventive spouse draws the reader through this novel quite happily. Jenkins flounders rather towards the end, but that's not an uncommon failing in a first novel; this is a fine debut. Whether either of these books would have been any worse or any better had their authors not "learned" creative writing is impossible to judge. It is possible, however, to believe that the much-discussed death of the British novel may be held off by the evidence creative writing courses provide of a wealth of young writers eager to learn their craft and turn it to art.



Tangled up and blue

THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS
By Don Hannah
Granta, £9.99
ISBN 1 86207 232 9

IN a small Canadian town lives get tangled up and blue. Don Hannah, the award-winning playwright, has written a wonderfully sinister novel, almost Gothic, in which all the wrong people seem to meet for all the right reasons. Sandy Whyte, community linchpin, finds his heartstrings aflutter when he spies a young boy on his property. Then there is Gloria, his cleaner, still considered a bit of an oddity for claiming, as a child, to have seen the Virgin Mary, and Raymond, her brother, who thinks he has seen a similar vision in Sandy's house. Hannah writes with smooth precision, making the ordinary seem anything but.

Good ol' boy

LOUISIANA POWER AND LIGHT
By John Dufresne
Vintage, £5.99
ISBN 0 09 927747 6

DUFRESNE'S revelatory tale begins in Monroe, Louisiana — City of Steady Habits, Crossroads to Pipelines, Corrugated Paper Capital of the North Delta Parishes, elevation 65 ft, population 56,600 — where telling tales of the Fontanas is as natural as bathing in the Mississippi. Initially, we are introduced to the line — which includes Peregrine Fontana, who sired two albino sons before he was drowned by Yankee soldiers, and Mangham and Bosco Fontana, who claimed to be the Lost Tribe of Israel. But the main thrust involves the family's last survivor, Billy Wayne Fontana. As this wildman turned free spirit hits the rocky road there is plenty to make us laugh.

Futurescape

ENDLAND STORIES
By Tim Etchells
Pulp Books, £8.99
ISBN 1 901072 12 6

THIS may be just another millennium collection, but Tim Etchells is not just another author. *Endland Stories* is a set of tales based around the fictional country of Endland where the scenery is taken straight from a low-budget *Blade Runner*. A woman re-names herself Silence in want of a bit of peace, the goddess Helen and the god Apollo 12 give birth to twin boys, Porridge and Spauld, and even the tears people shed have a copyright. But it is not just in the trimmings that Etchells succeeds. He brilliantly welds together archaic language with computer-speak to create a funny, caustic collection.

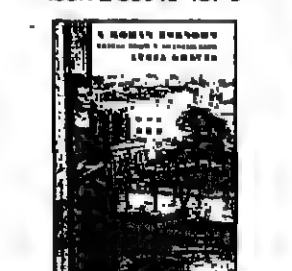
ALEX O'CONNELL

Goodbye to all that's me

The autobiography of Lucia Graves lacks focus, says Ian Stavans

Lucia Graves is a daughter of the poet Robert Graves from his second marriage. In this, her first book, ignited by a surgical operation her mother underwent in Barcelona in 1996, she shyly and anxiously dwells upon her legacy. Her primary themes, instead, are her own upbringing in Majorca, where she made her home as a child with her family in 1946, her education in Geneva and England, her marriage to a Spanish musician in 1965, and her enlightening if perplexing return to the Iberian peninsula; and also, in contrast, the plight of women during the Spanish Civil War, through Franco's regime, and under democracy. This duality — Spain and herself, portrayed as siblings rowing up simultaneously — results in an utter lack of focus, for whenever possible, Lucia sidesteps her autobiographical "I" to profile significant female acquaintances that left a lasting impression in her upbringing: a midwife, a ballet teacher, a nun. How significant these acquaintances are is not in question; the trouble is, the reader quickly grows impatient with them, skipping pages, since

A WOMAN UNKNOWN
Voices from a Spanish Life
By Lucia Graves
Virago, £18.99
ISBN 1 85049 487 0



these profiles are inadvertently presented as distractions. The argument might be made, of course, that such distractions are precisely what the book is about: a tapestry of women's journeys, structured as a Scheherazade-like tale of tales wherein the primary teller delivers a mosaic of "voices from a Spanish life" still struggling to find their own space. But the only voice that really matters, the only one with any weight, is that of Graves herself, and it is unfortunate that parallel stories, marginal to their essence to the core of the tale, are inserted to enhance her own odyssey.

Not all is misconceived in *A Woman Unknown*, though. Graves's style is harmonious, cinematic, even hypnotising; it seems built against the swift, egotistical texture of *Goodbye to All That*, its impact emerging not from the strength of the author's personality but from the honest desire to rescue memory from oblivion. Her descriptions of Spain's industrialisation, its progressive modernisation, are often entrancing. Her chapters on her bicultural self, part British, part Iberian, not at war with each other but in a continual dialogue, are insightful, as are her reflections on the place of domestic life at the end of this millennium.

These sections are invaluable to understand how dramatically different in nature are Spanish and British civilisations. They should be required reading to those interested in foreigners' views of the Hispanic world, alongside those by Malcolm Lowry, Graham Greene and Peter Matthiessen. Among Graves's best chapters is "The Translation Class", about her experiences as a student, first at the French Lycée in Kensington, then at Oxford, and the process through which she became her father's Spanish translator. This segment highlights not only the pre-eminence of both tongues — Spanish and English — in her mind but the symbolic triumph of the former, the weak one of the two, over its mighty counterpart, a motif at the heart of her volume.

Robert Graves only makes cameo appearances, the ghost of Hamlet's father casting a shadow not fully digested. This also leaves the reader dissatisfied. What is missing, overall, is a centre of gravity.



Portrait of a poet's family: left to right, Lucia Graves, aged 19, brothers Tomás and Juan, her mother Beryl and Robert Graves at home in Majorca.

self, and it is unfortunate that parallel stories, marginal to their essence to the core of the tale, are inserted to enhance her own odyssey. Not all is misconceived in *A Woman Unknown*, though. Graves's style is harmonious, cinematic, even hypnotising; it seems built against the swift, egotistical texture of *Goodbye to All That*, its impact emerging not from the strength of the author's personality but from the honest desire to rescue memory from oblivion. Her descriptions of Spain's industrialisation, its progressive modernisation, are often entrancing. Her chapters on her bicultural self, part British, part Iberian, not at war with each other but in a continual dialogue, are insightful, as are her reflections on the place of domestic life at the end of this millennium.

These sections are invaluable to understand how dramatically different in nature are Spanish and British civilisations. They should be required reading to those interested in foreigners' views of the Hispanic world, alongside those by Malcolm Lowry, Graham Greene and Peter Matthiessen. Among Graves's best chapters is "The Translation Class", about her experiences as a student, first at the French Lycée in Kensington, then at Oxford, and the process through which she became her father's Spanish translator. This segment highlights not only the pre-eminence of both tongues — Spanish and English — in her mind but the symbolic triumph of the former, the weak one of the two, over its mighty counterpart, a motif at the heart of her volume.

Robert Graves only makes cameo appearances, the ghost of Hamlet's father casting a shadow not fully digested. This also leaves the reader dissatisfied. What is missing, overall, is a centre of gravity.

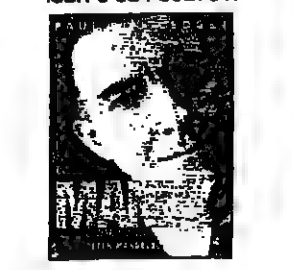
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A pursuit of power, but principles too

Campaign biographies have never been the myopic durable form of literature, but until recent times their purpose was to post the careers of politicians and the fortunes of their armies. Now the genre has changed, and they have become a function of party fighting. Paul Routledge's latest book is a campaign biography directed against Peter Mandelson, and by extension against Tony Blair. Even before publication it has had Mandelson's resignation from the Cabinet and his exclusion from power in an indefinite period, perhaps forever.

MANDY
The Unauthorised Biography of Peter Mandelson
By Paul Routledge
Simon & Schuster, £17.99
ISBN 0 684 85175 X



This is more doubtful, and it could, indeed, be wrong for the career of a serious politician to be destroyed by such a harsh portrayal, whose ideological motives are obvious. Though the book's apparent inefficiency is Gordon Brown, in fact it is clearly an attack by Labour on new Labour. Of course, Mandelson has a 30 of faults as well as outstanding talents, and he has provided plenty of ammunition for a hostile biographer. It was, moreover, unfortunate for him that, after the landslide 1997 victory, his first job in Government (as Minister without Portfolio) offered all too much scope for his manipulative and cynical tendencies, while denying him the opportunity for constructive work. His performance at the Department of Trade was cut short before he could prove himself.



Kiss off: Peter Mandelson

Despite his robustly biased approach, Routledge is a first-class journalist whose respect for facts often gets the better of his partisanship. He draws Mandelson's trouble is that he has been so conspicuous as an operator that the principled side of him has been obscured. Routledge implies that, partly because of his homosexuality, he is a rootless individual. During the period of relative leisure that he now faces he has the chance to demonstrate his true quality. Adversity may turn out to be his friend.

JOHN GRIGG

Silence is golden — and it can be speech

The tongue is a somewhat disgusting instrument, the cephalic equivalent of the turgid "virtue member", according to the 17th-century doctor John Bulwer, who regarded audible speech as inferior to visible gestures. But the voice is controlled and articulated by our soul, the central spirit located in our heart, in the opinion of the Renaissance metaphysician Francis van Helmont: vocal utterances are infused with a special reproductive power extracted from semen held back from physical emission. They free themselves from our bodies before flying off heavenwards to participate in "everlasting Being".

These bizarre views on the voice are reported in this intriguing book which is primarily a history of attitudes to deafness written by a philosopher at Middlesex University. The book is composed as a sandwich: it begins with an overview of ideas about sensory experience, particularly the assumption that perception is based on the "five senses". The main, central section is an extended history of attitudes towards the deaf from the 17th century to the 20th century. The final part returns to where the first section broke off, by looking again at the senses within a history of philosophy. At first, a history of the deaf embedded in philosophical musings seems an arbitrary topic for a 400-page book. Yet the subject goes to the core of our image of ourselves as human beings. Language is at

JEAN AITCHISON
I SEE A VOICE
Language, Deafness & the Senses — a Philosophical History
By Jonathan Rée
HarperCollins, £19.99
ISBN 0 00 255793 2



the centre of our sense of self, and notions about its reception and processing are linked to our innermost beliefs. To current readers, it is perhaps a surprise to find that respected philosophers, such as Locke, Leibniz and Hegel, have made curious pronouncements about the voice and hearing. The views of Leibniz are quaint: if it had not been for man's disobedience in Eden, he speculated, human reproduction could have been accomplished through the medium of speech instead of the humiliating activities to which we have to resort now that our souls are "coated with gross earthly shell". But the book is not just a titillating entertainment. Our views on

speech today are affected by various incompatible assumptions, which the author tries to unravel. Well-documented is the clash between those who assume the spoken word is related to the soul and spirituality, and those who regard the voice as either gross or irrelevant. This has carried over into the 20th-century controversy between the "oralists", who want the deaf to learn to speak, and the "gesturalists", who support sign language. The gesturalists have "won", as the book points out, in that sign language is now rightly regarded as "full" language, which, like written language, uses a different medium from spoken language.

Yet signing in the late 20th century is disappointingly glossed over. No information is given of the recent sign language that has developed spontaneously among the deaf in Nicaragua, for example, and current work comparing first and second generation signers is mentioned only in passing. Overall, the central historical chapters are clear and enlightening. But they are sandwiched between turgid first and last sections, which veer between pomposity and repetitive obviousness. Yet these early and late sections are not without value, and the myth of the "five senses" is usefully dispelled. Perhaps readers should behave like greedy sandwich-eaters: gobble up the filling, but take only intermittent nibbles at the crusts.

IN metro THIS SATURDAY:
Francis Gilbert enters the dark world of Lesley Glaister
ALSO: Hanif Kureishi tells metro how he writes

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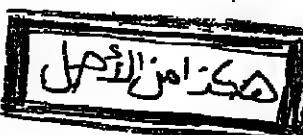
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Bargains of the week: winter sun and shopping in Jersey; gem of a weekend break in Amsterdam; cheap flights to Australia



● A selection of last-minute holidays and travel opportunities at home, on the Continent and further afield, many at bargain prices

BRITISH ISLES

BEACHY HEAD might be collapsing but Eastbourne just along the South Coast retains its Victorian elegance and is available for couples at a special price until the end of March, Tony Dawe writes. Consort Hotels is offering dinner, B&B and a typical Victorian afternoon tea for two for £60 a day at the York House Hotel, which has an indoor heated swimming pool. Details: 01323 412918.

■ **JERSEY** should escape the snow and its tax-free shopping is guaranteed to keep dedicated bargain-seekers warm, especially with the deals currently on offer. Jersey Travel Service is including a four-course dinner in the usual B&B price, cutting the cost of a week's half-board at a three-star hotel with return flights to £219 until the end of February. Two-night breaks cost £139. Details: 0181-891 6020.

■ **GLENN HODDLE**, the England football coach, may need more than a faith healer when his side take on France, the world champions, at Wembley on February 10. For those supporters who live in hope of famous victory, Goldenrail offering tickets to the game for a night's B&B at the

Kennedy Hotel, Euston, for £110. Details: 01904 638973.

■ **THEATRE** tickets will be a bonus to those booking a night at the five-star Conrad Hilton at Chelsea Harbour, London, with the Hotel Directory. The package costs £125 and is available until the end of February. Details: 0181-770 0123.

■ **A MUSICAL** weekend featuring the works of Mozart takes place at a Peak District guesthouse from January 29 to 31 and can be booked through Countrywide for £96. Details: 0161-446 2226.

■ **ROMANTIC** cottages are ideal for celebrating Valentine's Day and some with appropriate names are available from English Country Cottages. Lovedays near St Austell, Cornwall, is spacious, sleeps four, and costs £363 for a week from February 13. For a loving couple, snuggle in the Cotswolds might be more suitable. Designed for two and private, it is available from February 8 for a week for £267. Details: 0870-385 1155.

■ **CONNEMARA** for a little magic and romance is on offer from Irish Ferries Holidays with a five-night break from February 11 costing £169, including return ferry travel with car, two nights B&B in a Dublin hotel and three in Connemara. Details: 0990 170000.

■ **AROMATIC** massage oils smoothed on to the sounds of romantic music is the Malmison hotels' idea of the perfect Valentine's break. The group's hotels in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Manchester and Newcastle are offering the oils and accommodation in rooms with CD players from £75 a night for couples on February 12, 13 and 14. Details: 0141-221 1052.



Last-minute opportunities to go cross-country skiing are available: a week in a Swiss three-star hotel will cost from £467

EUROPE

CROSS-COUNTRY skiing can be one of the most rewarding winter sports and some last-minute opportunities are available. The Swiss picture-postcard village of Kandersteg is the base for Headwater Holidays, offering three half-days of langlauf ski lessons and a ski pack. A week's half-board at a three-star hotel from January 23 and 30 costs £467 for adults and £336 for children under 12, based on four people travelling together by car and including ferry crossings. Details: 01606 813367.

■ **TRADITIONAL** skiing is available at a variety of resorts for a week from January 30 with the Skiers Travel Bureau. The options range from half-board at Borovets, Bulgaria, for £227. Three Valleys, France, for £249, both with flights from Gatwick, to a week in a catered chalet at Saalbach, Austria, for £239, includ-

ing a flight from Manchester. Details: 01858 463858.

■ **SKI** independently across country through the Jura mountains on the Franco-Swiss border, suggests Intravel, which has availability from January 23. The price of £498 includes return Heathrow to Geneva flights, six nights' half-board in three hotels, luggage transportation as well as ski hire. Details: 01653 628862.

■ **HALF-TERM** skiing holidays for extended families or two or three together are on offer from Direct Line Holidays. Chalets sleeping 12 to 14 at Châtel in the Portes de Soleil are available for a week from February 13 and will cost £589 a person, including half-board, return flights from Gatwick or Manchester and ski guiding. Child discounts are also available. Details: 0181-239 8100.

■ **ALICANTE** for a week for

£79 looks like this week's cheapest winter sun offer and comes from Eclipse. It includes a return flight from Gatwick on January 23 and a room in a two-star hotel. An extra week costs only £30 more. Details: 0990 010203.

■ **MALTA** holidays are also available at discounts for a week from January 29. Malta Direct Travel offers self-catering in a St Paul's Bay apartment from £167, based on five sharing, and B&B at a five-star resort hotel for £291. Flights are from Gatwick. Details: 0181-785 3233.

■ **BRUSSELS** breaks are available again with Euro-tours, starting from January 21, and feature two nights' B&B at the Hilton Hotel and return Eurostar travel for £139. Details: 0181-299 8889.

■ **MADEIRA** is usually temperate in the winter, and from next month Explore Worldwide begins a new series of

eight-day tours featuring scenic walks, including an ascent of the island's highest mountain and, of course, time to sample the island's most famous product. The holidays cost from £490 with return flights and B&B. Details: 01252 760100.

■ **ANTALYA**, the Turkish resort with palm-lined boulevards, parks and a leading archaeological museum, is available for winter breaks with Metak Holidays. Fly from Stansted on a choice of dates and stay a week in the Sheraton Hotel, which has a range of sports facilities, for £469. Details: 0171-935 6961.

■ **A VISIT** to a diamond factory and a chance to win a gem are included in a Valentine's weekend break to Amsterdam with Kiker Holidays. Fly from a choice of UK airports on February 12 and enjoy two nights' B&B in a three-star hotel, plus a city tour, from £229. Details: 0171-231 3333.

LONG HAUL

FLIGHT deals to Australia are the flavour of the month, even though it is still midsummer Down Under. Airlines and tour operators believe that many would-be travellers are waiting for all the excitement surrounding the Sydney Olympics next year, which is good news for those who want to travel now. Tony Dawe writes.

Quest Worldwide is leading the way with a £440 return fare from London or Manchester to major Australian cities. The conditions are: stay at least a week and no more than a year and pay by Tuesday. Details: 0181-547 3322.

You have a little longer to save up for Australia's Great Escape offer to Perth, which costs £455 return and must be booked by the end of March. Details: 0171-584 0202.

■ **THE DEALS** from Destination Pacific are slightly more expensive, starting at £485 return to Australia, from Heathrow and Manchester, but offer additional savings. Stopovers in Singapore, for example, are available for £1 for the first and £18 for subsequent nights and attractively priced tours to Alice Springs and the Great Barrier Reef are also on offer. Details: 0171-400 7000.

■ **RIO DE JANEIRO** is another destination available at a bargain price. Bridge The World is offering return flights from Gatwick from tomorrow until the end of March for £419, perfect for catching the Mardi Gras Carnival from February 13 to 17. Details: 0171-911 0900.

■ **CHINA** for a week for £739, a £160 saving, is on offer from Premier Holidays and includes four nights in Beijing and two in Xi'an, home of the Terracotta Warriors. Fly from Heathrow on a choice of dates until March 27. Details: 01223 516677.

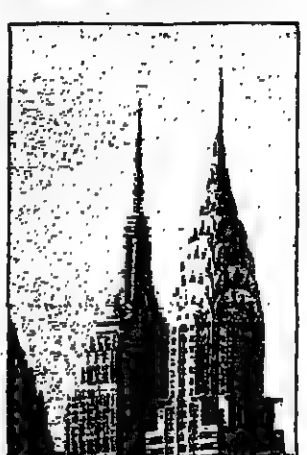
■ **Eilat** is available for £199 for a week but you must move fast to catch this offer from First Choice: the flight leaves Gatwick on Sunday. The price includes B&B at a two-star property in the Red Sea resort. Details: 0870-750 0100.

■ **RESTED** footballers and re-employed managers are now returning from the Caribbean so there is room for the rest of us with a few good high-season deals available. Tropical Places is offering a fortnight at the three-star Bay Gardens in St Lucia for £599

this month with Sunday flights from Gatwick and Thomas Cook Holidays has a week's all-inclusive at Club Antigua for £770, a £150 saving, available between January 25 and the end of February. Details: Tropical Places, 01342 825123; Thomas Cook, 01733 418450.

■ **THE MALDIVES** for £529 for a week's all-inclusive holiday is among late deals available from Lunn Poly. This Air-tours package starts with a flight from Manchester on January 24. Details from Lunn Poly Holiday Shops.

■ **GOA** is always intriguing but from February 13 to 15 it will be more bizarre than ever with a carnival promising three days of music, dancing, parades and general mayhem. They can all be enjoyed on a fortnight's package with So-mak Holidays which starts with a flight from Gatwick on February 5, includes B&B in a resort hotel and costs £429. Details: 0181-423 3000.



See New York for £319

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Dec 28	Tues	St Kitts	
Dec 29	Wed	Roseau, Dominica	
Dec 30	Thur	St Lucia	
Dec 31	Fri	Barbados	
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CHANGING TIMES

BOXING: TYSON SHOWS LITTLE SIGN OF OVERCOMING HIS PROBLEMS BEFORE RETURN TO THE RING

Man still capable of behaving badly

FROM SRIKUMAR SEN
BOXING CORRESPONDENT
IN LAS VEGAS

MIKE TYSON returns, on Saturday, to the ring where he disgraced himself. While most sportsmen would face such a prospect with remorse or trepidation, at least, Tyson, it seems, feels little or no pain for the despicable act of biting off a piece of Evander Holyfield's ear in that infamous world heavyweight championship bout in June 1997.

How will the crowd that chanted "Holy, Holy" that night receive Tyson when he enters the ring to face his first opponent in 19 months, Francois Botha, of South Africa. It matters little to Tyson.

The once-respected boxing historian said: "Muhammad Ali set the style, but there has never been a fighter as big as Mike Tyson. Yeah, I lost to Holyfield, I bit his ear. He's an outstanding fighter, but he's not Mike Tyson."

Tyson is still raging at the world that does not understand him, or his actions, inside and outside the ring. Perhaps that is why he finds it necessary to belittle the man who twice gave him the hiding of his life.

Tyson, who had to be cleared by a team of psychiatrists before getting his licence back from the Nevada State Athletic Commission, said: "I'm not supposed to be here now. I was supposed to be finished after Robin Givens [his first wife]. Most of the guys I've fought are in oblivion now and they are fighting to pay crack habits. I've been as low as a man could ever be. But I'm here."

While Tyson is happy to accept the millions that come to him as a result of publicity in the press, he is unable to handle media attention. He still laces his replies to journalists he does not like with expletives, or hides behind ramblings of a pseudo-intellectual nature, talking about God, Machiavelli and quoting Nietzsche.

It seemed for a moment, a couple of weeks ago, that the break from his old management of Don King, John Horne and Rory Holloway was beginning to help him to understand his problems. He impressed the readers of *The New York Times* when he appeared to show that he was capable of considerate behaviour. "I want to get my life



Tyson needed clearance from psychiatrists before being allowed to box again and serious doubts about his conduct remain after recent outbursts

stabilised," he told the newspaper. "I've been a real jerk."

"I don't know how my wife has been able to stay married to me. She is such a dignified woman, who is not used to the stuff I've put her through." Then, a couple of days later, Tyson was predicting the death of Botha. "I expect him to go down cold," he said. "I expect him to die." You could understand what the psychiatrists meant when they said Tyson had "a constellation of neuro-behavioural deficits".

This evaluation was further illustrated the other day, here, when Tyson denigrated Holyfield and Lennox Lewis, and insulted sports fans by saying: "If I fight on the same night, they're out of a job. They can't sell out Madison Square Garden. I can sell out Madison Square Garden masturbating."

"I am the champ. These guys talk about me like a god. I am the champ when I'm not the champ. When they are the champs. I'm the king. I'm

Mike Tyson and Mike Tyson is gonna be Mike Tyson."

Tyson refused to believe that the Lewis-Holyfield contest at Madison Square Garden, still nearly eight weeks away, was already sold out while his bout with Botha at the MGM

Grand Garden, just two days away, has still to see the "House Full" notice.

These utterances underline the belief that Tyson, outside the ring, is bigger than Tyson, inside it, and boxing is no longer a sport but a deception.

where outrageous comments, coupled with knockouts of hand-picked opponents, take in the gullible. A pity, because as a boxer, Tyson is not a fraud. For the past six weeks, he has been working in Arizona with his new trainer,

Tommy Brooks, who was in Holyfield's corner on that fateful June night. "We've gone back to basics. We're getting back to where he used to be," Brooks said.

Throughout his troubled existence in the past 19 months, Tyson has always had the memory of his legal guardian, Cus D'Amato, to sustain him, so the news that Tyson's accountant had found that D'Amato had left him \$200,000 (£122,000) in a savings account should lift his spirits.

"I guess Cus thought I would blow all my money," Tyson said, laughing. "When I was living crazy, I'd spend \$200,000 in one night on belts, underwear, champagne and girls. To me, \$200,000 is insignificant, even if I was doing bad. But when they told me he had left it it was like, wow. You could not give me a million dollars for that account now. What Cus did was truly overwhelming."



Tyson, left, trains for his comeback fight against Botha, the South African heavyweight

Gilchrist puts Sri Lanka to the sword

FROM MICHAEL HENDERSON IN SYDNEY

SYDNEY (Sri Lanka won toss): Australia beat Sri Lanka by eight wickets.

THE World Cup holders are finding life here more difficult than they would like. Deprived by injury of Aravinda De Silva, their leading batsman, they have lost both games in this triangular series, the second more comprehensively than the first. Australia dumped them at the SCG, making the highest total any side has made during second in 97 one-day international on this ground.

Adam Gilchrist, their cavalier wicketkeeper-batsman, smashed a superb 131 from 118 balls, having reached his half-century in only 37. The first of his two sixes, a huge heave to mid-wicket, punished the last ball of Muralitharan's first over. After that insult, Sri Lanka must have known there was no coming back. His second six, off Jayawardene, took him to his fourth one-day hundred in a year, since he was promoted to opener.

Muralitharan, the off-spinner with the double-jointed wrist action, has been in the wars since the team arrived in Australia. At Brisbane last Sunday against England, and again in Sydney, his appearance brought jeers and cries of "no ball" when he released the ball. Muralitharan put a brave face on things, and he will have to, because the feeling persists in these parts that he is a "cheater".

The silencing of Darrell Hair, the umpire who called Muralitharan seven times for throwing during the Melbourne Test four years ago, has fooled nobody. Hair will be charged with breaching the international Cricket Council's code of conduct, for making remarks about the bowler's "diabolical" action in a recent book, but his decision to stand down from this series, to exempt the Australian Cricket Board from disbarment, does the game no credit.

Relations between Australia and Sri Lanka have not been good since that tour and great since the rejoining when the Sri

Lankans won the last World Cup, beating Australia in the final three years ago. "Last time they were out here, there was a bit of hostility and stuff," Shane Warne, who is leading Australia in these games, said.

Warne took two wickets yesterday through the captain had to do without Brad Young, his left-arm spinner, who smashed his knee and ankle against the perimeter board in a vain attempt to save a boundary.

The Australia fielding lacked distinction as Jayasuriya and Tillakaratne made the half-centuries that carried Sri Lanka to a score of 259 for

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA	
S.T. Jayasuriya c Gilchrist b Allen	85
R.S. Jayawardene b Warne	32
M.S. Jayawardene c Warne b Allen	22
H.P. Thirimalingam run out	73
D.P.M. Jayawardene c Gilchrist b Allen	28
U.D.U. Chandana b Fleming	2
R.S. Jayawardene c Gilchrist b Murali	18
M.P. C. Chandana run out	0
M. Muralitharan	18
Extras (b 2, lb 5, w 10, nb 9)	36
Total (9 wickets, 59 overs)	259
G.P. Wickramasinghe did not bat.	
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-85, 2-108, 3-130, 4-183, 5-214, 6-217, 7-228, 8-258, 9-259.	
BOWLING: M. Gilchrist 10-0-38-1; Fleming 10-0-51-1; Bennett 2-0-25-0; Allen 5-0-42-2; Warne 10-1-44-2; Seamer 5-0-39-0; Mervin 5-0-25-0.	
AUSTRALIA	
A.C. Gilchrist c Alaparthi b Vaas	131
M.E. Waugh c and b Muralitharan	85
R.T. Ponting not out	43
D.R. Martyn not out	16
Extras (b 8, lb 4, w 10, nb 10)	32
Total (2 wickets, 46.1 overs)	260
G.S. Bennett, M.G. Bevan, S.K. Warne, B.P. Allen, D.W. Fleming, S.E. Young and G.D. Mervin did not bat.	
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-151, 2-225.	
BOWLING: Vaas 6-1-43-1; Muralitharan 10-0-49-1; Jayawardene 7-0-40-0; Chandana 9-0-61-0; Jayasuriya 7-1-0-29-0.	
Umpires: T.A. Pave and S.J.A. Teal	

nine. Jayasuriya's 65 came from 62 balls.

Gilchrist made him look a slowcoach. The left-hander drove powerfully through cover and punished anything that could be lifted through mid-wicket. He and Mark Waugh put on 151 and, after Waugh went, Ponting maintained the steady work. Gilchrist eventually sided Vaas to long-on, but the game had long since been settled in Australia's favour.

SHEEHAN on BRIDGE

BY ROBERT SHEEHAN, BRIDGE CORRESPONDENT

When the defenders have run out of trick-taking ideas in the side-suits, it's time to look for a plan involving trumps. This may entail a forcing defence, a ruff, or a promotion. East missed his chance on this hand from the EBU Autumn Congress Teams.

Dealer West	East-West game	IMPs
	♠ A J 4 3 ♥ A J 8 4 ♦ A Q J ♣ J 5	
	♠ K 7 ♥ 10 9 7 6 ♦ K 10 6 7 5 ♣ 8 6	♠ Q 10 ♥ 5 3 2 ♦ 9 6 3 2 ♣ A K 7 4
	♠ K Q ♥ 4 ♦ Q 10 9 3 2 ♣ 4	
	S Pass W Pass N 1H E Pass	S Pass W Pass N 3S E Pass

Contract: Four Spades by South. Lead: eight of clubs.

East took his ace-king of clubs, South playing the three and the ten, and switched lamely to a heart. Declarer played ace and another spade to bang the top trumps together and claimed his contract.

East's first thought after trick two should have been to deduce the club position. The lead of the eight, followed by the six, was inconsistent with an honour holding. Nor could it be three small: from that the convention is to lead the middle card with the king, an "uppercut" forcing dummy's ace. Thereby the defence promote a second and setting trump trick.

Robert Sheehan writes on bridge Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday.

WORD-WATCHING

By Philip Howard

- ABANDON**
a. A fillet
b. To abandon
c. But not
- BARBE**
a. A dressing down
b. A javelin
c. Sir!
- BOUCHET**
a. A kiss
b. A wine plug
c. A pear
- BROOL**
a. To weep
b. A lemon drink
c. A humming

Answers on page 46

KEENE on CHESS

BY RAYMOND KEENE
CHESS CORRESPONDENT

Wijk aan Zee

The tournament in the Dutch town of Wijk aan Zee, which is due to start tomorrow, boasts a powerful field. It includes Kasparov, Anand, Kramnik, Ivanchuk, Shirov, Svidler and Topalov, as well as Ivan Sokolov, the winner at Hastings.

The most notable absentee is Anatoly Karpov, the five-time champion. It is also strange that Michael Adams, Nigel Short or Matthew Sadler do not appear in the lists. Nevertheless, this tournament will be one of the major events of the year and I will begin regular reporting from next week. Here is a game from last year's event.

White: Viswanathan Anand
Black: Veselin Topalov
Wijk aan Zee 1998

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠	♠
♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣	♣

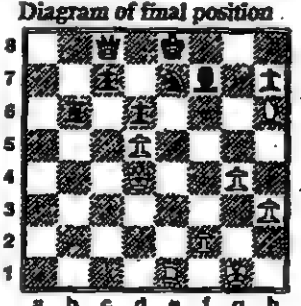


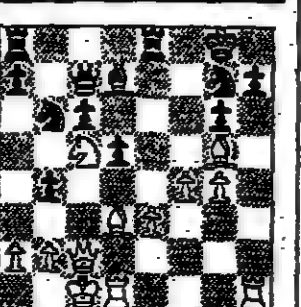
Diagram of final position

London clubs
Tonight, in the final of the London clubs' knockout competition, Home House face the Athenaeum. It will be a strong event with former British champions Bob Wade, Peter Lee and Michael Hemming in action as well as former European junior champion, Shaun Taulbut and the international master Ali Mortazavi.

Keene online
You can send me your queries, puzzles, problems and games direct by email. The address is keenechess@aol.com. The best contributions from Times readers will be published either here or in the Saturday Times Weekend column.

Times book
The Times Winning Moves 2 contains 240 chess puzzles from International Grandmaster Raymond Keene's daily column in *The Times*, and is available now from bookshops or from B.T. Batsford Ltd (tel: 01797 369966 at £6.99+p&p).

Raymond Keene writes on chess Monday to Friday in Sport and in the Weekend section on Saturday



Solution on page 46

CYCLING

Boardman determined to show best of British

BY JEREMY WHITTE

CHRIS BOARDMAN will head the list of contenders in the 1999 Prudential Tour of Britain, it was announced in London yesterday. The second edition of the PruTour, which begins in Westminster on May 23, squeezes nine stages of racing into just seven days over a 732-mile route. The 18 teams of six riders will visit the South Coast, the Brecon Beacons and the Pennines.

"This race is the best thing to happen to British cycling since the Tour de France came to Britain in 1994," Boardman, an Olympic gold-medalist, said at the launch yesterday, "and I'm looking forward to doing my bit on home roads."

After the first stage, a 50-mile circuit race through the streets of Westminster, the 108-mile field takes on a 111-mile road race to Portsmouth, which is followed later the same day by a flat

31-mile time trial on the Hampshire seacoast, which is undoubtedly designed to suit Boardman's strengths. Stage three takes the race from Winchester to Bristol, prior to the 130-mile fourth stage to Swansea. For the first time, the Severn Bridge will be closed to traffic to allow the PruTour field to cross the Severn estuary before tackling some of the steepest climbs in South Wales.

The gruelling finish up Constitution Hill, a cobbled 1 in 3 climb in the centre of Swansea, will, in particular, reveal the men from the boys. "The day to Swansea is the hardest in the race," Boardman said unequivocally. "But it's suited to a powerful rider, who can sprint a bit - not just a lightweight climber."

As well as Credit Agricole, who sponsor Boardman and Stuart O'Grady, of Australia,

his team-mate, and the PruTour winner last year, the week-long race is expected to attract several other leading European professional teams.

While doping scandals continue to dog the European professional scene, Alan Rushion, the PruTour promoter, is adamant that the British showcase, after the new ethical stance taken by the Tour de France organisation, will remain a clean race.

"If we have any ethical concerns over a rider before the race start we will ask that rider to withdraw that rider," Rushion explained. "If they refuse to do so, we will then consider rescinding their invitation."

PRUTOUR ITINERARY: May 23: Stage 1: Westminster circuit (52 miles). May 24: Stage 2: Winchester-Poole (111 miles). May 25: Stage 3: Winchester-Bristol (110 miles). May 26: Stage 4: Bristol-Swansea (130 miles). May 27: Stage 5: Swansea-Brecon (125 miles). May 28: Stage 6: Brecon-Cardiff (65 miles). May 29: Stage 7: Cardiff-Poole (75 miles).

SQUASH

Wright flight brings reward

BY COLIN MCQUILLAN

THE absence of Peter Nicol, the world No 1, and Ong Beng Hee, the world junior champion, saw UK Packaging, of Chingford, slump to their first defeat in the SRA National League by 3-2 at Potters Bar this week. They retained the lead in group B from their rivals from Hertfordshire, however, by two points.

Player loyalty clinched the tie for Potters Bar. Sue Wright flew back sleepless from winning the Apawamis Open in New York to clinch the fifth-string rubber by 9-3, 10-8, 7-9, 9-0 against Vicky Lankester, a junior called up when Linda Chamman, the first choice, failed to match Wright's enthusiasm for a transatlantic journey.

Leaders of the other groups were similarly pegged back with TSM Duffield beaten 3-2 at home by Hallamshire in group A and UNIS Guildford narrowly escaping with a 3-2 victory at home against UWIC Cardiff, the bottom side in group C.

At 2-1 and 8-0, Hannah Wright-Davies, making her debut for Cardiff, appeared to have her match against Lisa Stephens sewn up until a fire alarm triggered an evacuation of the building for more than ten minutes. On their return, Stephens gained a temporary boost from the break, but the Welsh junior claimed the rubber by 9-4, 6-9, 9-1, 9-4.

Gavin Jones, a fellow Wales under-19 player, also made his debut for Cardiff and repeated his unexpected victory in the British Junior Open last week over Adrian Grant, a member of the England squad that won the world junior championship.

Peter Genever, making his long-awaited debut for Chichester after injury, led his club to a 4-1 win away to Lee-on-Solent to strengthen its position in second place in group C. Duffield, without Derek Ryan, the Irish champion who took the men's Apawamis title in New York, were made to struggle by Hallamshire, even though, Cassandra Jackson, the England No 1, returned from ankle injury problems to beat Cheryl Beaumont in straight games.

Chris Walker, the England and UNW Northumberland captain, who, like Wright, also returned from New York with hours to spare, led his side in the away match against Manchester Northern and was beaten by Marcus Barrett. Jane Martin and Gary Thwaites secured victories, however, to help Northumberland to win 3-2 and move up to third place in group A.

Smith, who is also the world doubles champion, had lost to Male in two previous finals in 1993 and 1995. "It's been a long time coming and while it's not the way I had planned on becoming world champion, it certainly makes up for previous defeats," he said. "I feel this is just reward for all the practice and training I have put in over the years."

Male, 34, who has held the title since 1988, said: "It's a great pity the title has been decided in such an unsatisfactory way, especially as the rules appear to allow for a postponement on medical grounds. Still, Neil deserves credit for playing the way he did in Chicago."



Male era ended by Smith

BY JAMES SCHOLEFIELD

NEIL SMITH, of Great Britain, is the new world rackets champion, bringing to an end the 11-year reign of James Male, his compatriot. Male sustained a serious injury in the American leg of the challenge last Saturday, which Smith won 4-2, and will not be fit to compete at the Queens Club on Saturday, leaving the organising committee little choice but to declare Smith the new world champion.

This is the first time since 1820, the first year of the world championship, that the title has been decided in such circumstances. "Having been presented with all the medical evidence and considered both players, it was decided that Male must take the court on Saturday or forfeit the match and title," a spokesman for the organising committee said.

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Wilson: his record time against the Gazelle Boy is a long way from being eclipsed today

Today we unmask one of the greatest unsung heroes in the history of British sport. He is the man who lit the flame of athletic ambition for thousands of schoolboys with dreams of being champions by bringing them the adventures of an outrageous sportsman, record-breaker, and role model.

Week after week for years he chronicled the exploits of the mysterious Wilson of the Wizard, regarded by many as the undisputed champion of comic book superheroes.

A couple of weeks ago I wrote about the great Wilson after rediscovering a battered old copy of a book entitled *The Truth About Wilson* by W.S.K. Webb. I revealed that William Wilson may well still be alive at the age of 203, but that many of his astonishing world

records set in the 1940s and 50s have been matched or overtaken by today's real-life athletes.

This provoked a torrent of response from *Times* readers, some of them very distinguished and a lot of them no longer in the full flush of spike-clattering youth, who were quick to defend Wilson's formidable reputation.

"What about his three minute mile?" asked a very senior member of Jesus College Oxford. "Have you forgotten his race against the Gazelle Boy?" protested a Wilson-disciple from Leominster. "Against the Gazelle Boy he clocked 100 metres in 4.7 secs. It's all there in the 'Has Wilson Come Back?' series."

Among the many communications from Wilson buffs was one from Ian R. Smith of the Association of Track and Field Statisticians

and a former deputy editor of *The Guinness Book of Records*. He is the man who can tell us the truth not just about the strange fictitious athlete, but also about the mysterious W.S.K. Webb, who brought his adventures to the world.

Webb, he informs us, was the pen-name of Gilbert Lawford Dawson, a jobbing journalist turned author, born in Leominster in 1903. The Amazing Dalton, who would send off his stories a dozen at a time to his publishers, D.C. Thomson in Dundee, turns out to be almost as astonishing as The Great Wilson himself.

His output was prodigious. "In a six-week period in 1949, for instance," Ian Smith said, "Dalton wrote 316,000 words of serial fiction, one novel of 80,000 words, and three episodes of a radio serial

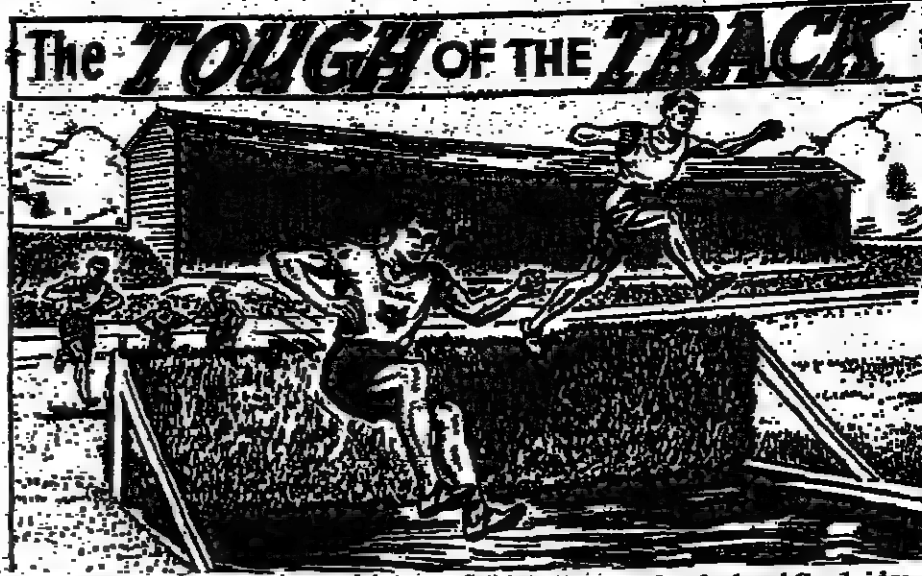
Phenomenal pen that rewrote the record books

The sporting world's two greatest athletes are sensationally found to have been related all along



— some 400,000 words in all. He never, as far as I can find, corrected or rewrote a word," Smith added, "and sometimes he would keep six or seven serial stories going at the same time. A single story, by the way, for *The Wizard*, averaged 5,000 words. Dalton is on record as having completed one such in two hours and twenty minutes."

The stories may have been



Tupper: modest background and source of the toffee-noses of Oxford and Cambridge

churned out at a record-breaking pace, but they had a grip on the imagination of many thousands of schoolboys. In 1948, for instance, despite the problems of wartime paper rationing and distribution, sales of *The Wizard*, complete with the latest exploits of Wilson, reached around 250,000 every other week — accounting for 6.5 million for the year.

When you consider how the comic would have been passed on from hand to grubby hand, the impact on a generation of young readers is enormous.

The true legacy of Wilson and Dalton, his creator, could be seen in the packs of boys who would try out their plimsolls and their dreams on the cinder tracks of the land. In terms of an athletic role model there was only one man who

could rival the appeal of Wilson — and that was that other great fictional hero, Alf Tupper, the 'Tough of the Track'.

Many young athletes, including one of Britain's finest marathon runners, Ron Hill, modelled themselves on Tupper. "He was the sort of character I could admire," Hill said, "an underprivileged lad who could always beat the toffee-noses from Oxford and Cambridge. He was always up against it, and he rose above it."

Rival fans of Wilson and Tupper would speculate endlessly over which of them might win in a head-to-head. And it is in this matter that Ian Smith reveals the most surprising secret of all: the adventures of both of these phenomenal athletes came from the same pen. The Great Dalton was the author

behind them both. With both the Great Wilson and Alf Tupper in his stable, Dalton's record at having inspired young athletes must be as great as any gold medal-winning champion, and yet he was never a great sportsman himself. "He was lean and 6ft 11in," Smith said, "an athletic figure, but not an athlete."

There is a rumour that Dalton once penned a story putting Wilson and Tupper in the same race. Tupper, so the rumour goes, came second. The Millennium must be the time for a rematch. The venue should be the Dome.

Rivals could argue for years about the result, for sadly the man who gave life to both Tupper and Wilson died in 1963. But sport would have been poorer without the unforgettable achievements of the Great Gilbert Lawford Dalton.

SPORT IN BRIEF

Defeated Prince is king for a frame

■ SNOOKER: Jason Prince, the world No 39, from Northern Ireland, became only the fifth player to compile a maximum 147 break in professional competition and lose his match when he was beaten 5-4 by Ian Brumby, of Liverpool, in the final qualifying round of the British Open at Blackpool yesterday (Phil Yates writes).

■ RUGBY LEAGUE: Salford Reds made their tenth signing of the close-season when Neil Baynes, 21, a prop forward who found first-team opportunities limited at Wigan Warriors, agreed a two-year contract yesterday (Christopher Irvine writes).

■ CRICKET: The venues of the first two Test matches on the Pakistan tour of India, which is under threat of disruption by Hindu right-wing activists, have been swapped. Madras hosts the opening Test from January 28 and Delhi the second, from February 4.

■ RUGBY UNION: Gloucester have arranged their home Tetley's Bitter Cup match with Henley, surprise conquerors of Bedford, for Saturday, January 30 to avoid a clash with neighbours Lydney, whose game with Saracens, the holders, takes place the next day.

■ CYCLING: Richard Virenque, who had announced his retirement after the disrupted Tour of France last year, will race for Polti, the Italian professional team, in the new season. Virenque was the leading competitor in the Festina team that was thrown out of the Tour for allegedly using banned substances.

■ FOOTBALL: Sydney's Olympic Stadium for the 2000 Games will be inaugurated on June 12 with a match between Australia and a Rest of the World XI.

TENNIS

Graf wins first leg of Williams challenge

FROM JULIAN MUSCAT, TENNIS CORRESPONDENT IN SYDNEY

THOSE still unmoved by the women's game would have left the splendidly ageing White City complex here yesterday with food for thought after watching Steffi Graf douse Serena Williams's rampant ambition in their second round match in the Sydney International tournament.

From the bowels of a site on the verge of retirement, Graf sent out the message that she still has plenty to offer. The German, 29, last played here 15 years ago, when Williams's sole fashion accessory would have been a nappy, and by the way she emerged victorious from an unrelenting duel, announced herself as a leading force for the Australian Open next week.

Graf, having beaten Serena, 17, the younger of the Williams sisters by 6-2, 3-6, 7-5, next has to face up to Venus Williams. Whether she harbours enough resilience this early in the season to complete the family double must be open to some doubt, but Graf showed enough to worry her contemporaries when the curtain rises in Melbourne on Monday.

The outcome was in the balance for every one of the 148 minutes that Graf and Williams locked horns. The standard rarely reached exalted heights until the deciding set, when both women struck the ball with unbridled ferocity.

Where Graf represents grace, Williams sports a physique to match that of Denise Lewis, the British heptathlete. Her raw power caused Graf endless problems, although the German's greater control stood her in good stead on many crucial points.

Williams had every incentive to topple her opponent, for 1998 had failed to bring her the expected rewards. She was plainly primed for a flying start, which made Graf's determination — in temperatures

rising to 37°C — all the more admirable for this was only her second match of the season.

While Graf is tuning herself to concert pitch, Lindsay Davenport, the world No 1, looked some way adrift of it as she laboured to overcome Mary Joe Fernandez 6-4, 7-6. Davenport, who trailed 4-0 and 4-0 before capturing the opening set, was unable to assert herself against her American compatriot. She was fortunate indeed that Fernandez did not force a third set for, on set point in the tie-break, Fernandez's backhand drive only narrowly missed the line.

Equally ominous for Davenport has been the sight of a revitalised Martina Hingis, whom Davenport deposed from the No 1 spot at the US Open in August. The reverse has had a positive effect on Hingis, the Australian Open champion, who has evidently shrugged off the complacency that undermined her last year. "Going down to No 2 has probably helped her to focus again," Davenport ventured of her rival. "She is very hungry and more aggressive on the court. When she is like that she is very hard to beat."

Quite what motivates Anna Kournikova is anyone's guess. The Russian, who served one game full of double-faults among a near-impulsive total of 16, again succumbed tamely, this time to Dominika Dementieva, 6-1, 6-2.

In her past five matches, Kournikova has now dished up a mind-boggling 93 double-faults. Curiously, her rapid decline dates back to the occasion, in October, when she lent her name to a series of coaching articles in a German magazine — on how to serve.

One cannot help but bemoan the fact that Britain has no budding talent like Lleyton Hewitt, of Australia, who followed up his first-



A fired-up Graf left no doubt about how highly she valued her win over Serena Williams

round defeat of Pat Rafter by downing Nicolas Pietrangeli, of Germany, for the second time in a week.

Hewitt, 17, who burst into prominence when winning in Adelaide 12 months ago, overcame Andre Agassi en route, 3-6, 6-4, 6-2, in the first round of a possible 24 sessions over 11 days.

England's indoor side for the international series in Bournemouth in March, despite playing well in the trials last weekend. The selectors have dropped two stalwarts from Norfolk, David Ward, who made his international debut in 1983, and John Ottaway, who has been a regular at lead since 1985.

In an attempt to turn the tide after eight dismal years, they have introduced four new caps. Les Gillett, Tim Houghton, Mark Royal and Mark Smith, and recalled three former internationals, Stuart Airey, Danny Denison and Mervyn King.

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expression spoke volumes of his disappointment at failing to find his touch.

Tim Henman, another with much to gain from the tribulations afflicting Sampras and Rios, yesterday succumbed to Mark Philippoussis, of Australia, in his opening match at the Colonial Classic, an eight-man exhibition event in Melbourne. Philippoussis, who ousted Henman from the US Open in September, rallied from dropping the opening set to prevail 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.

SAILING

Ainslie puts seal on Laser superiority

BY EDWARD GORMAN, SAILING CORRESPONDENT

BEN AINSLIE yesterday concluded a remarkable season in Lasers by carrying off his first world title in the class with a race to spare at the world sailing championships in Melbourne. His resounding win follows victories over the past 12 months at Kiel Week, in the British national championships, and his second title at the European championships.

Ainslie, the world No 1 in Lasers, who also won the ISAF single-handed world sailing championship in Dubai last March, has been thwarted twice in his attempts to win the Laser class world championships by Robert Scheidt. The Brazilian former world No 1 also beat him at the Atlanta Olympics to take gold to Ainslie's silver. But Ainslie, 27, has since overcome his old rival on at least five occasions and he has now proved he can do it at the class world championships.

In a typically consistent series, Ainslie, from Lymington in Hampshire, scored six wins, a second and two thirds in 11 starts. His worst finish was an eleventh place in his penultimate counting race. Scheidt finished second overall, with Karl Swenson, of Sweden, third. Andrew Simpson, of Great Britain, sailed the regatta of his life to finish fifth.

Ainslie needed to finish three places above Scheidt to secure the title in the first race yesterday. In a freshening breeze, this was not easy, especially as the Brazilian rounded the first mark well ahead, with Ainslie seventh.

"It was quite windy, but some of the people up front weren't heavy-air specialists and I had better speed, which allowed me to get up to third by the finish," Ainslie said. "It has been a dream for quite a while to win the Laser worlds and it's been a hard battle."

Ainslie's win and his consistent race-winning form in Melbourne is all the more impressive for having been achieved in varied conditions, ranging from more than 25 knots to very light and fickle breezes. His weakness in



Ainslie: dream result

heavier conditions is a thing of the past as he continues his preparations for the Sydney Olympics next year.

Ainslie's victory earned praise from John Dexteryshire, the Royal Yachting Association Olympic manager, who was able to celebrate Britain's first world championship in an Olympic class since Stuart Chidley and crew won the Soling world match racing championship in 1995. "Simply brilliant," he said. "It was a fantastic performance by a true champion."

Much of the credit for Ainslie's success must go to the guiding hand of his father, Roddy, and the joint decision he took with his son for Ainslie to stay in Lasers after Atlanta. Father and son realised that to have branched out might have affected the intensity of focus Ainslie has demonstrated over the past three years in the highly competitive and technically challenging international Laser fleet.

Elsewhere in Melbourne, in the other world championships, four British yachtsmen went into the last 12 races in the elite or "gold" fleet, with Tim Robinson and Ian Walker leading the way in tenth place overall. In blowy conditions yesterday, Robinson and Walker recorded a fifth and a seventh to add to seven previous top-five finishes.

"The racing has been very tight as always and we have surprised ourselves at how easily we have made the cut," Walker said. "We are yet to capsize, somehow."

Sleepless Anderson gives Wood wake-up

BY DAVID RHYS JONES

WILLIE WOOD, who lost in the final of the world indoor singles championship ten years ago, was defeated in the preliminary round of the 1999 event at Potters Leisure Resort in Norfolk yesterday by Steve Anderson, from Australia, 7-4, 7-4, 1-7, 1-7, 7-5.

Anderson, who has been sampling the delights of the resort well into the early hours of the morning, revealed that he has also been getting up early to practise. "I believe players in tournaments like this have a duty to mix with the locals, and the late nights have helped me relax," he said.

Anderson surprised Wood when he won the first two sets, but the wily Scot looked the winner when he won the next two as a canter. But the Australian found a second wind and sailed into the first round.

Wood felt that he lost the game in the second set, when, after opening with a full house, he allowed Anderson to score seven shots in a row. Wood found himself five down after three ends of the deciding set, but was level at 5-5 three ends later.

Dropping a single on the next end, Wood should have taken advantage of a lapse on the following end from Anderson, whose nearest bowl was

BOWLS

almost a yard from the jack. Wood's first three bowls were so far away that he forsook the draw, and decided to fire with his last bowl, in an attempt to ditch the jack. "I'm normally pretty good at the drive," he said. "I had the best back bowl, and realised I had a chance to win the game, but I was off target. It was very disappointing, because it was a match I should have won."

Giff Sanders, whose appeal against a ten-year ban from Devon's outdoor greens comes up at Worthing tomorrow, has failed to force his way into

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Pirie excels in parallel career

BY A CORRESPONDENT

SKIERS from the United States took the first three places in the international parallel slalom, the only event to be run at the British and national championships in Tignes, France, yesterday, as strong winds and yet more driving snow put paid to the junior downhill race.

British hopes succumbed to the strength and depth of the American challenge, only five British skiers reaching the second round. Green, the defending champion, fell to Jesse Maddex, the eventual winner.

Sean Langmuir, the British Land alpine team coach, lost to Werner Herzog, another

SKIING

British team trainer, in the quarter-finals. Herzog, an Austrian, is the former world professional parallel slalom champion.

In the best-of-three-races final between Maddex and Marco Sullivan, the winner of the international downhill on Tuesday, Maddex won twice in a row, with superior starts and better speed in the second half of each course.

Racing head-to-head down two fast, fairly straight, identical 13-gate parallel courses has been a popular event at these championships for five years, and is now being considered

by the International Ski Federation for inclusion on the World Cup circuit.

It was left to Tessa Pirie, 20, the national downhill title holder, to uphold British pride in the women's section. She took Treza Trtikova, of the Czech Republic, to a third race and lost by centimetres. "My third start was not great and I just couldn't get back from there," Pirie said. Chimene Alcott, the 16-year-old British junior champion, took third place.

Pirie starts as favourite in both of today's races — the junior downhill and the super-G. She will also be a key player in Britain's quest to win the international team parallel slalom.

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GOLF: EAGER BRITON STEALS A MARCH ON RIVALS IN EFFORT TO CLIMB RANKINGS

Faldo sets sights on revival

FROM JOHN HOPKINS
GOLF CORRESPONDENT
IN JOHANNESBURG

AT THE Houghton Golf Club on the high veld, the sun shines on the pale faces of those golfers who have flown in from colder climes. It is just past midsummer and the air is clear and dry and the clouds are high. They are almost as high, in fact, as the hopes of many of the players beginning the last season of the century on professional golf's European Tour.

The Alfred Dunhill SA PGA championship starts this morning, the first event in a season of great moment and change. It is not just Nick Faldo who says, as he did yesterday: "This is a big golf year. There has not been one like this for some time. I shall play about 27 events this year, whereas recently it has been down to 22."

Indeed, the hopes and fears for 1999 can best be expressed through the eyes of two men, one of whom is Faldo, who has returned to the country that he first visited as an amateur 24 years ago at the beginning of his attempt to climb back up the world rankings. The other is David Carter, who won his first tournament in Europe last season and then, when partnered by Faldo, captured the World Cup for England in New Zealand last November.

"I am here to get some golf in, to play for Ryder Cup points and world ranking points," Faldo said. He will play in Cape Town next week and Dubai next month before flying to the United States, intent on fashioning the improvement that he needs if he is to achieve his stated ambition of being a winner once again.

Perhaps plagued by off-course worries, which now seem to have been resolved, he has plummeted drastically since 1996, the year in which he won the Masters. At the end of 1996, he was ranked No 6 in the world. He fell to No 17 in 1997 and No 66 last November before finishing fourth in the Australian Open, a result that moved him up the list to No 57. "I have been told I'll be all right for the Anderson," Faldo said, referring to the elite matchplay event in February.

Carter, 26, is still suffering from pains in his left shoulder and arm, a reaction to years of bad posture. Yet after his success with Faldo in Auckland and after his victory over Colin Montgomerie in a play-off for the Irish Open last year, he cannot wait to get started once again. He wants the improvement that he has shown in the European order of merit each year — from No 92 in 1995 to No 19 last year — to continue.

For Carter, this country is just like home. In fact, that is exactly what it is, although he lives in Surrey, looks and speaks like an Englishman and regards England as his home.



Faldo hones his game yesterday during the pro-am that preceded the Alfred Dunhill SA PGA championship

He was born and went to school in Johannesburg, grew up 20 minutes from Houghton and speaks Afrikaans.

If it is a big year for Faldo and Carter, a great player determined to recapture former glories and a rising star of the European Tour, which is starting, appropriately for a tour that knows no boundaries, in South Africa, then the same is true for Ernie Els. Els, who was married at the end of last year and spent his honeymoon coasting around the west coast of this country in a four-wheel drive vehicle and sleeping under the stars, is anxious to rediscover his best form after a disappointing season.

To help, he has bought a house at Wentworth, begun back-strengthening exercises and slightly remodelled his swing. "Let's hope my golf has improved now I'm married," Els, who won an event on this course in 1992, said, grinning. "I have played twice since the wedding and I broke par both times, so that is encouraging."

In addition to the four major championships and an event such as the Players' Championship, which is a major championship in all but name, the 1999 golfing calendar contains a Walker Cup at Neim at the beginning of September and a Ryder Cup in Boston, Massachusetts, at the end of the same month. Little can match the raw excitement generated by a team competition in an individual sport and the prospect of these two events within 14 days of one another is mouthwatering.

This is not all. In 1999, there is a milestone in professional golf. Three inaugural World Golf Championships (WGC) events are to be held — in California, in February, Ohio, in August, and Valderrama, Spain, in November. Prize-money totals \$5 million at each, with a first prize of \$1 million. They are the start of a world tour for the game's best players, who will eventually circle the globe playing against one another.

The event at La Costa near San Diego in February is

matchplay for the top 64 golfers in the world rankings. The two others are strokeplay for fewer competitors. As prize-money counts both towards the Ryder Cup team and the Order of Merit, great efforts are being made by players to improve their world rankings while players who are nowhere near that level — men such as Severiano Ballesteros — continue to fulminate against the unfairness of it.

What they say in essence is that the WGC seems to make sure that the rich get richer and richer. It is undeniable, but it is also life and one wonders whether Ballesteros would be saying the same sort of things if he were at his best?

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MOTOR RALLYING

Ford lose their focus in water pump dispute

BY JEREMY HART

FORD face exclusion from the Monte Carlo rally, which starts on Sunday, and subsequent rounds of the 1999 world championship, after three Japanese rivals reversed an earlier decision to allow the new Martini Ford Focus to compete on its debut event with a non-standard water pump.

The three Japanese teams, Mitsubishi, Toyota and Subaru, represented under the banner of the Japanese Automobile Federation, yesterday overturned their previous agreement to let Colin McRae's radical new car start the season, once new information about Ford's strategy came to light.

"Having agreed last week we found out a few things that changed the situation," David Richards, whose Pro-Drive

operation runs Subaru's rally team, said. "It transpires Ford weren't just looking for an exemption to run the water pump in Monte Carlo. But until they had got the technical specification legalised, that is unacceptable."

Other teams described Ford's attitude to preparing their new machine as arrogant and incompetent. The time had come, one said, for Ford to get their knuckles rapped for trying to compete with a car that uses non-standard parts. "I am absolutely sure that mistakes have been made, but Ford cannot be accused of trying to pull the wool over the other team's eyes," Martin Whitaker, Ford's Director of European Motor Sport, said.

"We told the other teams immediately that the simple fact is that the car cannot run with a standard water pump, so it is not just a case of starting Monte Carlo. Unless the regulations concerning water pumps are changed, and that's something I believe all the teams would benefit from, we cannot run. That is not only disastrous for Ford, but for the world rally championship."

Last week, aware that there was no time to legalise the water pump before Monte Carlo, Malcolm Wilson, Ford Rally team principal, began contacting the other teams to secure their support for special dispensation to run the possibly performance-enhancing part. Their support seems to have proved shortlived.

A senior source at the FIA, motor sports' world governing body, said: "As the car stands at the moment it is illegal. We would not be in a position to change the rules freeing the specification of water pumps unless all the other teams agreed. Even then, we would still need to examine the issue to consider allowing it to run."

Only Peugeot have supported the change in regulations. The support of other teams now seems highly unlikely before Sunday. "The rules have been tinkered with too many times. Now is time for some consistency in the sport," one team spokesman said.

The Ford team had secured the services of Colin McRae, for £6 million, but they had announced a substantial sponsorship deal with Martini Racing. "I have been assured that the car will run," McRae said.

WORD-WATCHING

Answers from page 42

ABAND

(b) To abandon or forsake. An artificial contraction of abandon, used by Spenser and other Elizabethan affectors of archaism, probably in imitation of pairs like open/ope, Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 1590: "And Vortiger enforst the kingdom to aband."

BARBE

(c) A respectful title given by the Vaudois to their teachers. The Swiss French, Italian and Romansh versions mean "uncle," literally "bearded one".

BOUCHET

(c) A pear. Supposed to be an application of the French bouchet, a drink composed of sugar, cinnamon and water.

BROOL

(c) A low, deep humming sound. A murmur. Also brooling. Apparently an adaptation of the Teutonic, eg Dutch *brullen*, to roar (as a lion). Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, 1837: "Like to the brool of the royal forest-voice."

SOLUTION TO WINNING CHESS MOVE
1. Rd7? Kd7? 2. Bxg6+ Kg8? 3. Qh2 and mate follows.

TELEVISION CHOICE

Nannies for the Nineties

Norland Nannies
Channel 4, 8.00pm

The Norland organisation was set up as an enlightened response to repressive Victorian ideas about bringing up children. Its nannies were taught to value children, respect their individuality and boost their self-esteem. A century on, Norland's ideas have changed little, and nor have the nannies' uniforms. Critics of Mary Poppins will echo through this six-part series which follows a group of teenage girls through Norland's rigorous training course. Some survive better than others. Put in charge of little Alex while his Mum is away working, Rachel Page is convinced she has found her vocation. But Shanta Gillott is already disenchanted with the whole nanny idea and thinks that parents should be at home with their children, especially, as in the case of one of her charges, during a child's birthday.

Vets in Practice
BBC1, 8.00pm

That we are in the third series about the young vets we first met as nervous students testifies to an apparently insatiable appetite for programmes about sick animals. It cannot be coincidence that *Vets in Practice* has taken over the slot recently occupied by *Rolf Harris and his chums at Animal Hospital* and if *Vets in Practice* lacks a Harris figure to front, its cast-aways are no less varied. For Fiona Green, the small animal vet in Reading, surgery is enlivened by the arrival of her first hare (first leg caught in a garage door) and a woodpecker which has had a nasty encounter with a cat. Steve Leonard in Lancaster has to deal with three orphaned hedgehogs suffering from diarrhoea while his brother Keith is trying to get a collapsed dairy cow back on its feet. As usual the vets' personal stories are mixed with their professional ones.

Family Confidential
Channel 5, 8.30pm

Not many young men in Britain can be studying for their GCSEs and looking after their new baby but trust *Family Confidential*, a series not afraid to be anything but confidential, to find one. He is Mick Jones, 14, father of Jamie, ten months, named

Mick Jones and the mother of his baby in *Family Confidential* (Channel 5, 8.30pm)

after Jamie Lee Curtis. Mick, Jamie and Helen, the 17-year-old mother, are living, uneasily, with Mick's mother Liz. She was furious when she heard about the child but has mellowed. Fick enjoys a less than harmonious relationship with her mother, whom she accuses of abandoning her. As Jamie's christening looms, the prospects for a lasting relationship between Mick and Helen seem no better than 50-50. Mick prefers to go off with his mother rather than change nappies, leaving Helen to accuse him of shirking his fatherly duties.

Fai Ellek: A Horizon Trilogy
BBC2, 9.30pm

It is no fun being overweight and not being able to do anything about it and this round-up of the latest remedies offers little comfort. Some sufferers have found solace in the Internet, not because it offers magical solutions but as a way of listening to misery by sharing it with others. But shedding the pounds is another matter. Diets are mostly useless and stomach stapling, though sometimes effective, is brutal. Drugs are the other main hope but there are terrible stories of side-effects. The programme features a woman from Oregon who is dying from a lung disease caused by diet pills she took for only five weeks. Meanwhile, the food industry is working on a new type of "fat", made entirely from fibre and special supplements. The idea is to make more nutrients and less fat. Peter Waymark

RADIO CHOICE

Evening Concert
Classic FM, 9.00pm

Radio 3 is presently advertising itself on BBC television using the pay-off line "not just a pile of CDs". One wonders to which rival radio station this remark might apply. While we ruminate as to the answer to that little poser, let me recommend this programme as evidence of being a radio station with a pile of CDs is not necessarily a bad thing. Tonight, Nicholas Trevelyan's show celebrates Joaquín Turina, on the 50th anniversary of his death. Turina was among the most nationalistic (in the musical sense) of Spanish composers so he did much to acquaint us with the fiery rhythms and sensitive orchestrations that give Spanish music such an implacable crackle. Peter Barnard

RADIO 1 (BBC)

6.00am Zoe Ball 9.00 Simon Mayo 12.00pm Kevin Greening 2.00 Mark Radcliffe 4.00 Chris Moyles 6.00 Dave Pearce 8.00 The Evening Session 10.00 Tracey Gold 10.10 John Peel 12.00am Andy Kershaw 2.00a Dave Warren 4.00a Scott Mills

RADIO 2 (BBC)

6.00am Sarah Kennedy 7.30a Wake Up to Wogan 8.30a Ken Bruce 12.00pm Jimmy Young 2.00a Ed Stewart 8.00a Johnnie Walker 7.00a David Allen 8.00a Paul Jones 9.00a Barry Tait's Comedy Classics: The New Look. Starting Jon Pertwee, Leslie Phillips and Ronnie Barker (45). 9.30a Comedy Showcase: Noel Kennedy. See Choice (1/9) 10.00a Girls and Guitars. Sarah McLaughlin (50). 10.30a Richard Allison 12.00pm Katharine McPhee 3.00a Alex Lester

RADIO 5 LIVE (BBC)

6.00am Morning Report 8.00a Breakfast 9.00a Nelly Campbell 12.00pm The Midday News, Presented by Annie Webster 1.00a Rucho and Co 4.00a Drive 7.00a News Extra with David McNeil 7.30a Hardest Gears. Henry Cavill remembers Muhammad Ali inside Edge. Rob Green looks at the state of the sporting headlines 8.00a Hooters 8.30a Sportsday 10.00a Late Night Live. Presented by Brian Hayes 1.00am Up All Night

VIRGIN

6.30am Chris Evans 9.30a Russ Williams 1.00pm Nick Abbot 4.00a Harriet Scott 6.00a The 10.00a Richard Allen 1.00am James Martin 4.30a Jimmy Carr

TALK RADIO

6.00am Big Boy's Breakfast 8.00a Scott Chisholm 1.00pm Anne Razburn 3.00a Peter Dinkley's DriveTime 5.00a The Sports Zone 8.00a James White 1.00am Ian Collins

RADIO 3

6.00am On Air with Petroc Trelawny, Handel (Organ Concerto in F, Op 4 No 4); Britten (Simple Symphony); Beethoven (Symphony No 2 in D major, Op 73) 9.00a Mendelssohn (Piano Concerto No 2 in D minor, Op 25) 10.30a The Week: Emmanuel Ax 11.00a Sound Stories: Paula Cornfield Baker investigates the newly lost film by Salma and Wagner 12.00pm Composer of the Week: Johannes Brahms 1.00a The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert: Brodsky Quartet. Haydn (String Quartet: In C, Op 54 No 2) 2.00a The BBC Orchestra: BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under Jerzy Maksymiuk and Osmo Vänskä. Elisebeth Bultman, violin 4.00a Ensemble with Peter Gonsky 4.45a Music Machine with Tommy Pearson 6.00a In Tune on the publication of a new biography, Sean Rafferty discusses the music of Strauss 7.30a Peter Kennedy's 3 Live from the Castle Hall, Bristol, introduced by Chris Wyles. Alceste Lulovmo, piano, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment under Herbert Sontag

Mendelssohn (Overture: The Hebrides, Op 26) 8.15a Book of the Month 8.30a Concert, part two. Brahms (Piano Concerto No 2 in D minor, Op 25) 9.30a Postscript: The Red Flag and the Red Mask 10.00a Music: Restored includes Downward passages from Red Bird and a Siberian violin sonata performed by the Russian ensemble Musica Petropolitana 10.45a Night Waves: Paul Allen explores the increasingly complex ways we think about the human body in art and science 11.30a Jazz Notes: Amy Shapiro reviews some new CDs with Campbell Scott 12.00am Composer of the Week: Johannes Brahms 1.00a Through the Night with Donald Macleod. 1.00a Prague RSO under Leo Sverosky, Martin Kralik, piano, Mozart (Overture: The Marriage of Figaro); Chopin (Piano Concerto No 2 in F minor, Op 26); Shostakovich (Symphony No 15) 2.30a Beethoven (Piano Sonata in C minor, Op 111) 3.00a Schostakovich: The 30th Anniversary of the Death of Shostakovich 3.30a Let's Move 3.50a World of Words: Alan Jones 4.00a Drama 4.20a Listen and Write 4.40a Standard Grade English 5.00a Kalamus (Pseudonym No 1) 5.30a Abel (Sonata No 5 in F)

RADIO 4

5.30am World News 6.30a Shipping Forecast 6.40a Morning News 6.45a Prayer Book 7.00a Today's Topical Issues, with Charlotte Smith 8.00a Today with John Humphrys and James Naughtie 8.25a (LW) Yesterday in Parliament Round-up of political developments 9.00a In Our Time with Melvyn Bragg 9.30a Transatlantic: A little patch of the Caribbean in North London (15) (1) 9.45a (Fai) The Detective, the Detective and Arthur Conan Doyle Michael Williams reads part four of Martin Scott's biography (1) 1.00a (LW) Daily Service 10.00a Women's Hour with Jenni Murray 11.00a From Our Own Correspondent: Reports from BBC correspondents worldwide 11.30a Old Dog and the Pteridote Nook is on the verge of romance — and Andy is on the verge of being found out. With Michael Williams and Lisa Collins (25) 12.00a (LW) News Headlines: Shipping Forecast 12.00pm (Fai) News 12.04a You and Yours Consumer news and investigations 1.00a The World at One with Nick Charles 1.30a Hidden Treasures: Last Tango presents the antique quiz from Dymally Park near Bath. With Penny Britton and David Bettle 2.15a Afternoon Play: Dogs Goff's black comedy set in a Pinner pet emporium. Starring Tina Gray and Shirley Dean 3.00a Call Your Name 3.00a 0970 010444 Peter White presents the consumer justice programme 3.30a Tales from the Village: Joel Khazoo meets the traditional African musicians who still play a pivotal part in village life (45) (1) 3.45a This Scattered Isle: Anne Messey narrates the history of Britain, drawing on the words of Winston

Churchill, Read by Paul Eddington (1) 4.00a World of Words: Michael Rosen explores the language of ideological persuasion (45) 4.30a The Material World: Trevor Philips explores the phenomenon of organic gardening 5.00a The Presenters by Cery English and Eddie Mair 6.00a Six O'Clock News 6.30a The Women's Comedy starring Toby Longworth and Nail Adenwood. In the first episode they first about going on holiday (55) 7.00a The Archers 7.15a Front Row: Franca Stock examines the French composer Olivier Messiaen's success at turning birdsong into music 7.45a Lady Susan: Lavinia Murray's adaptation of Jane Austen's story. Broadcast earlier as part of Women's Hour (1) 8.00a Case History: Professor Roy Porter considers Anthony Eden's performance during the Suez Crisis (1) 8.30a The Week in Westminster: Peter Rickard of The Times looks behind the scenes at Westminster 9.00a Testbeds: Vanessa Collingridge explores how technology will shape the future 9.30a In Our Time with Melvyn Bragg (1) 10.00a The World Tonight with Robin Lustig 10.45a Book at Bedtime: Name Part nine 11.00a Late Night on 4: World of Pulp: The pub is threatened with closure, and it's time to move to keep it open. With John Thompson, Phil Cornwell and Alastair McGowan (24) 11.30a (Fai) Experimental Evidence: The Hand of Friendship: Gary Anderson presents the top 10 political handshakes of recent times 11.30a (LW) Today in Parliament 12.00am News 12.30a The Late Book: Last Resort 12.45a Shipping Forecast 1.00a As World Service

FREQUENCY GUIDE. RADIO 1, FM 97.6-99.5. RADIO 2, FM 88.0-90.2. RADIO 3, FM 90.2-92.4. RADIO 4, FM 92.4-94.6. LW 88.0-90.2. RADIO 5 LIVE, MW 688, 909. WORLD SERVICE, MW 648; LW 150 (12.45-5.59am). CLASSIC FM, FM 100-102. VIRGIN RADIO, FM 105.8; MW 1197, 1215. TALK RADIO, MW 1053, 1089. Television and radio listings compiled by Ian Hughes, Rosemary Smith, Susan Thomson, Jane Gregory and John McManus.

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BOXING 42

Foul-mouthed Tyson continues on his pre-fight offensive

SPORT

THURSDAY JANUARY 14 1999

Former England coach hopes to escape Crystal Palace crisis

Venables demands pay-off

By MATT DICKINSON

IT ALWAYS seemed unlikely that Crystal Palace could afford a manager of Terry Venables' impressive stature or even more impressive wage demands, and so it has proved. The nightmare for Mark Goldberg, the club's owner, is that he cannot afford to get rid of him either.

It is amid such financial chaos that Venables will sit down with Goldberg later today and attempt to thrash out a pay-off for his £1 million-a-year contract that has lasted little more than six months of its projected five years. The former England coach is believed to want a seven-figure sum to ease his departure.

Where Goldberg will find the money from, though, is anybody's guess, including his bank manager's, because he appears to be struggling to pay even the million. His creditors include his lawyers, who are seeking £375,000, and even Palace players, with Attilio Lombardo reported to be on strike until he is paid £100,000. In buying the club for £22.8 million last year, the former computer tycoon clearly failed to do his sums.

Of course, Venables knows all about financial disorder and even if he is attempting to escape a monetary minefield on this occasion, it is another episode that will be turned against him by those who believe that it is silver rather than silverware that inspires him. He may walk away with his bank balance enhanced, but neither his coaching credentials or his credibility have prospered.

His departures from Tottenham Hotspur, the England post and Portsmouth have all been overshadowed by financial controversies and even a ban from being a company director for seven years has not dampened his enthusiasm for entrepreneurial gambles. He has invested heavily in a Spanish golf and leisure resort to rival La Manga and it is in Europe that Venables may



Venables, trying to plot a return to the FA Carling Premiership, has failed to keep Palace in form on the pitch while the club struggles off it

look for work next if he stays in coaching. The job opportunities in the FA Carling Premiership are limited at present, although that situation may not last long.

That is all assuming that Venables does depart Palace today, which is far from certain, given Goldberg's precarious financial state. He may ask Venables to remain in the role of consultant while he attempts to clear his debts.

"I am not going to forecast what's going to happen today," Venables said last night. "I am going in there to listen. Mark

has got some things to sort out, so it is up to him. I will be taking training as normal."

Goldberg's problems stem back even as far as the original takeover of Palace from Ron Noades, now chairman and manager of Brentford, for a hugely inflated sum. Noades, who still owns the freehold of Selhurst Park and the Goldstone training ground, is understood to be owed £5.5 million.

Like other millionaires before him, Goldberg appears to have allowed ambitions of sporting glory to override all business acumen. Star-struck by Venables, he as good as allowed the former Barcelona and Australia coach to write his own contract, which not only ensured that he was better paid than Alex Ferguson

and Arsène Wenger, the managers of Manchester United and Arsenal, but also able to walk out after a year.

Goldberg also rashly recruited dozens of commercial and business staff, many of whom now face losing their jobs, without investing as heavily in a team that now languishes 11 points off the play-off places in the Nationwide League first division.

Players have to be sold, but only Matt Jansen is worth a substantial sum. The forward's loyalties are to Newcastle United, the club that he supported as a boy, but Blackburn Rovers, Arsenal and Manchester United are also interested, although not at the £4.5 million fee that Goldberg has agreed with Newcastle. It is the sale of Jansen, against his

wishes, on top of the departure of Paul Warhurst to Bolton Wanderers for £800,000, that has convinced Venables that his job is impossible, but it may now allow him to receive his pay-off.

Ted Buxton and Terry Fenwick are also likely to depart the club, with Steve Coppell, the technical director, stepping into the breach for his third period as Palace coach. What Goldberg will do in the longer term, however, is uncertain. Supporters were already voicing the name of Dave Bassett yesterday after his recent departure from Nottingham Forest, but they are likely to discover that even he is out of Goldberg's price range these days.

Georgi Kinkladze, the former Manchester City mid-

field player, is preparing to find a new club, in the wake of Ajax's announcement that he no longer figures in their plans.

During his time at Maine Road, Liverpool were believed to be interested in signing the Georgian international, although Everton were the only club to table a formal offer. The Kinkladze left City for Ajax for £5 million last summer, and the Nationwide League second division club has first option to buy him back.

West Ham United have bought Scott Minto, the full back, from Benfica for £1 million. The former Chelsea player flew into London yesterday to wrap up the move and will be challenging for a place against Sheffield Wednesday on Saturday.

England bid goes on the offensive

By OUR SPORTS STAFF

THERE was always likely to be a war of words. As the leading contenders to stage the World Cup finals in 2006 made their pitches at the Expo 99 football trade fair in Cannes, they — that is England, South Africa and Germany — were jostling under the spotlight, each adamant that theirs was destined to be the winning bid.

England went into bat first. Sir Bobby Charlton and Sir Geoff Hurst displaying impressive confidence in the English campaign. "I hear things from Germany and South Africa about why English football makes mistakes and why the World Cup should not come to England," Sir Bobby said, "but the one thing that is consistent is that every time a statement comes out from one of our competitors about the World Cup, they invariably mention England."

"Now why is that? It's because they are afraid of us and they respect the strength of our bid and they know that to win the World Cup themselves, the people they have to beat are the English."

Sir Geoff pointed out that England has the necessary stadiums, security, telecommunications, transport, hotels and experience, through hosting Euro 96, to succeed.

German and South African officials were not best pleased. Danny Jordaan, the South Africa campaign chief executive, responded: "Sir Bobby is entitled to his opinion, but we are not afraid of them." He added that the Football Association's recent scandals would have "consequences" for the England bid if they were proved to have been linked to the World Cup campaign.

Question marks still remain over South Africa's ability to host the tournament, but Jordaan maintained that his country was close already to meeting the stringent requirements laid down by FIFA, the world governing body, whose 24 executive members will choose the successful bid in March next year.

Germany did not make a formal presentation, but Franz Beckenbauer, the former World Cup-winning captain and manager, was on hand to renew claims that England had gone back upon a "gentleman's agreement" to back Germany's claims in return for support before Euro 96.

Warren pays £7.2m to King

By JOHN GOODBODY

FRANK WARREN, the British boxing promoter, agreed yesterday to pay £7.2 million to Don King to settle their long-running dispute over their former partnership. Despite the acrimony between the men, they shook hands outside the High Court in London, where the settlement was formally agreed.

Warren said afterwards that it was "cheap at the price" to settle the row. He said that he had the money to pay the colourful American promoter, but would be dining tonight on "soup in a basket".

Under the deal, Warren acknowledged his obligation to pay King in recognition of his rights as a partner and withdrew publicly all the allegations that he had made against King and his company, Don King Promotions.

According to King's lawyers, Warren has agreed, if necessary, to sell his luxurious house in Hertfordshire to make the first of a series of



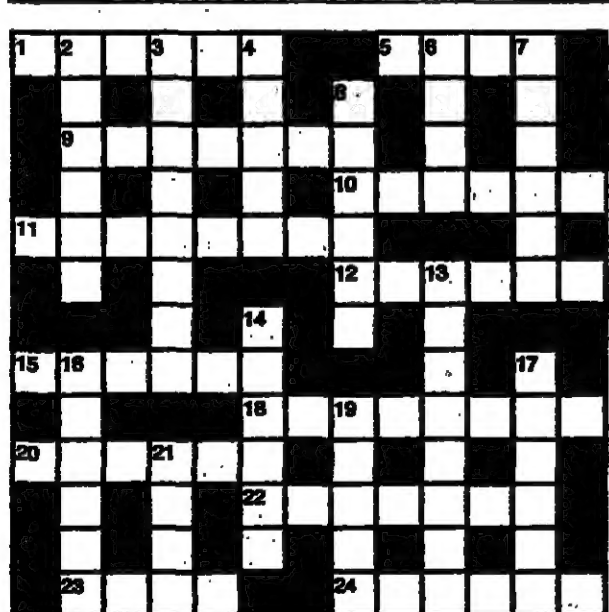
Warren: high price

agreed payments. This season, Warren has had problems in paying the players of Bedford rugby club, of which he is the owner.

One of the biggest disputes between the two men was a claim of Don King Productions Inc. that it was entitled to a share of all profits made by Warren during the partnership from British and European boxers, including Naseem Hamed, the World Boxing Association featherweight champion.

Asked if he would still set up contests for Hamed in the United States, King replied: "Naseem is a very good fighter. I will speak to him if he were to ask. The UK guys need a commitment and I will give them that commitment to help those who are less fortunate."

TIMES TWO CROSSWORD



No 1614

ACROSS

- 1 One owing feudal homage (6)
5 Feeble person; unwelcome plant (4)
9 One of a threesome (7)
10 Excuse; think logically (6)
11 Deprive of movement (8)
12 Soak up (6)
15 Polished, sophisticated (6)
18 Present in quantity (8)
20 Periphrasy (6)
22 A language; type of bond, horn (7)
23 Rough, impolite (4)
24 Area (of influence); globe (6)

DOWN

- 2 Of the stars (6)
3 Ceylon republic (3,5)
4 A sweet; money (slang) (5)
6 Napoleon exile island (4)
7 Swallow greedily (6)
8 Run (of luck); run naked (6)
13 Small battle (8)
14 Doghouse (6)
16 Harvest gatherer (6)
17 Writer of books (6)
19 Old sorcerer (5)
21 Prod, provoke (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1613

- ACROSS: 1 Chaucer, 5 Rich, 9 Locum, 10 Cranium, 11 Man-about-town, 12 Denure, 13 Island, 16 Ping-pong ball, 19 Squeeze, 20 Undid, 21 Tess, 22 Ephesus.
DOWN: 1 Cult, 2 Aclaim, 3 Come a cropper, 4 Reckon, 6 Luigi, 7 Homind, 8 Daff as a brush, 12 Deposit, 14 Alludes, 15 Sneeze, 17 Nouns, 18 Odds.

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IOC identifies 12 bribery cases

By JOHN GOODBODY

TWELVE members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) face expulsion after an inquiry into bribery allegations in the choice of Salt Lake City, Utah, as host of the 2002 Winter Games.

The IOC yesterday said that its six-man commission investigating the scandal had "identified improper behaviour by certain IOC members" and letters have been sent to them demanding explanations.

Anita DeFrantz, an American member of both the IOC and the Salt Lake Organising Committee (SLOC), said that as many as 12 of her fellow IOC members could be ousted. Juan Antonio Samaranch, the IOC president, has said

that guilty members would be expelled or asked to resign.

The report by the commission is scheduled to be published after a meeting of the IOC's executive board in Lausanne, Switzerland, on January 24. It will recommend changes in both the bidding and IOC election process.

Robert Garri, the SLOC ethics panel has identified eight IOC members who could be implicated in the scandal involving cash gifts, scholarships for relatives, a land deal exceeding £40,000, medical operations and sexual favours. DeFrantz dismissed any pos-

sibility that the Games would be moved from Salt Lake City. She said: "The people there have been working very hard. The venues are in place. Things are moving forward. The IOC is very satisfied with the progress in Salt Lake City. The athletes of the world deserve to have it as the site."

However, Marc Hodler, the Swiss IOC member, who last month made the original allegations about corruption in the movement, is concerned that the Mormon city would be unable to raise sufficient money to stage the Games.

He said: "It is impossible for the SLOC to reduce its spend-

ing further. If the budget isn't balanced, one could envisage transferring to Calgary or Lake Placid those sports for which installations have not been built in Salt Lake, maybe ski jumping, speedskating, cross-country skiing and the biathlon."

Meanwhile, in Australia, Kevin Gosper, an Australian IOC member, said that the organisation would examine claims by a senior member of Sydney's successful bid for the 2000 Games that he was approached to offer bribes. The claims come from Bruce Baird, a former New South Wales Olympic minister and now a member of the federal parliament.

Jordan pledges not to return

The curtain finally comes down on an astonishing basketball career

Michael Jordan announced his retirement from basketball yesterday, ending one of the most amazing careers in sports history. The National Basketball Association (NBA) superstar, who led the Chicago Bulls to six titles in the past eight seasons, also won ten scoring titles and five Most Valuable Player awards as well as two Olympic gold medals.

Jordan thanked David Stern, the NBA commissioner, Jerry Reinsdorf, the Bulls owner, plus the Chicago fans, who must now learn to get along without him: "The best way to survive without Michael Jordan is to start to live without him," Jordan said.

Jordan vowed he will not return, finding new challenges as a father and businessman to replace those he overcame on the basketball court. He

also plans to play more golf and spend more time with his children. "I never say never, but I'm 99.9 per cent sure," Jordan said. "My life is going on to a whole other stage. It's a different challenge and I welcome that. From a career standpoint I have accomplished everything I could. Right now I don't have the mental challenge I have had in the past to proceed as a basketball player."

He added: "It's difficult. You're giving up something you truly love. I don't want to fool myself. To start something and lose motivation in the middle of the season is unfair to who I am working with and unfair to the fans."

Wall Street brokers are quaking after Jordan's

retirement. He performed the same role of top scorer for the trainer manufacturer, Nike, that he played at the Bulls. He was Nike's profit engine.

Economists have tried to estimate the value of Jordan's

endorsement of such shoes as the Air Jordan. He is said to have generated extra wealth across America totalling \$10 billion.

Jordan's retirement came as a complete surprise to shareholders. On Monday, Nike shares had rocketed on the New York stock market after the announcement of the end of the NBA lockout. But yesterday morning the shares plummeted four per cent in the first few minutes of trading.

There is no obvious replacement for Nike and they must be hoping that Jordan becomes bored with retirement and returns to the NBA. He has done so before. He announced his retirement in 1993 to play baseball, but after a year he was back. At the time, Nike shares shot up. Investors knew the biggest cash machine in professional sports was on the court again.



Jordan: new challenges

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